DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 697 CS 201 280

AUTHOR	Wimer, Frances N., Ed.
TITLE	Focus: Teaching by Genre.
INSTITUTION	Virginia Association of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE	74
NOTE	64p.
JOURNAL CIT	Virginia English Bulletin; v24 n1 Entire Issue Spring 1974
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$3.15 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Class Activities; Drama; *English Instruction; Instructional Materials; *Literary Genres; *Literature Appreciation; Poetry; Secondary Education; *Teaching Techniques; Writing

ABSTRACT

The focus of this bulletin is teaching the various literary genres in the secondary English class. Contents include "The Song Within: An Approach to Teaching Poetry," "Teaching Folk-Rock," "Approaches to Teaching Poetry," "Focus on an Elective Program: Twentieth Century Lyrical Poetry," "Hoffman and Poe: Masters of the Grotesque," "Plays: Shared and Seen," "Using Painting, Photography, and Film to Teach Narration," "This Is the Way the Story Goes...," "Teaching Black Literature in the Secondary School," "An Approach to Student-Centered Discussion," "The Pun as an Effective Classroom Technique," "The Language Arts Skills Center," "Critical Writing and Decision-Making," "Teaching Writing to High School Students," and "Great English Teaching Ideas." (RB)

ED 091697

VOLUME XXIV • NUMBER 1 • SPRING 1974

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Virginia English Bulletin

FOCUS:

TEACHING BY GENRE

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

CS201280

Virginia English Bulletin

VOLUME XXIV, NUMBER 1 SPRING 1974

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Articles are invited and should be submitted to the editor. Manuscripts should be typewritten and double-spaced. When possible, footnoted material should be incorporated within the article. Deadlines for copy are October 15 and February 15.

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Virginia English Bulletin

Published two times a year in December and April by the Virginia Association of Teachers of English, an Affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and a Department of the Virginia Education Association. Subscription is included in the annual membership dues of $2.00; non-member rate for institutions and individuals is the same. Single copies are $1.00.

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The Song Within: An Approach to Teaching Poetry

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TEACHING BY GENRE

Teachers tell me that students hate poetry. Observation tells me that students do not hate poetry, although I would not quarrel with the statement that students generally hate being taught poetry. This, I think, is because teachers have often stressed the wrong things in the wrong poems for the wrong reasons. In the school situation, I, too, hated poetry, which is odd because I was at the time writing quite a bit of it (we weren't encouraged to write it in school in those days because poetry is not expository!), reading quite a bit of it (because several of my friends were writing it, and I liked to read what they wrote), and listening to quite a bit of it (because I bought endless recordings of popular ballads and of poets reading their own work).

But bad things happened in school when we approached poetry. For example, a chronological coincidence often results in students' having to read some poems by Walt Whitman one night in preparation for a morrow which might just include a surprise identification test on last night's poems and having to read some poems by Emily Dickinson the next night for the same reasons. I call this approach to poetry "Poetry-at-the-Gallop." The pace is dizzying and the contrast between Whitman and Dickinson is so great that one of these two supreme poets must come out rather badly in the students' eyes.

In my case, it was Dickinson who suffered—although she did not suffer so much as I did, for I found the whole experience to be a very anti-poetic one. I recall proclaiming to those who would listen that Whitman was a strong and heady brandy, but that Dickinson was a cup of tepid, weak tea. And I believed that into graduate school when one evening, sans threats from anyone, I voluntarily read five or six Dickinson poems for the sheer fun of doing so, and realized that I had made a superficial judgment years before and had been fool enough to let that judgment stand as a stumbling block to me for nearly a decade.

Now when I think of Whitman and Dickinson, I think of two worthy poets who should never—no NEVER—be taught back-to-back. I love and appreciate each; but when I think of them, I think of them in terms of the sorts of opposites which were illustrated at a meeting of aestheticians in Hamburg, Germany some years ago. Eminent aestheticians from all over the world had gathered to discuss the questions of beauty and

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Editor's Note: *Dr. Shuman has edited the recently published book,* Creative Approaches to the Teaching of English, *Peacock Publishers, Itasca, Illinois.*

form with which this particular breed of philosopher concerns himself.

As the story goes, a German aesthetician brought with him a mighty sword, its sturdy blade beautifully engraved, its mammoth handle set in rare jewels. To the assembled throng he pointed out the exquisite beauty of the weapon; then, suddenly, quite without warning, he hefted it over his head, and in one decisive swoop brought it down on a stout oak chair which fell into two clean-cut pieces. The audience gasped in disbelief as he demonstrated that a thing of beauty can also have those architectonic characteristics which make it supremely useful.

The German was followed on the program by an Oriental, slight of build. From a small case, he drew forth a thin, delicate sword. Its chaste blade had graceful but spare etching upon it. Its ivory handle was unadorned but fit the hand precisely. The Oriental took from his pocket a silk handkerchief, threw it into the air, and as it shimmered earthward, with one graceful sweep of his sword, he cut it in twain. He turned to the startled audience and said, "Possibly this will illustrate the difference between Oriental and Occidental art." And, indeed, such differences exist also among poets, many of whom become uncomfortable neighbors in anthologies which are chronologically arranged. Where such a situation exists, sensitive students, students who love poetry, may very well experience an inner rebellion—at least, it is to be hoped that they will. Only the insenitive can read Whitman and Dickinson back-to-back without rebelling. Hence, in teaching them, one should allow for a reasonable separation.

CAN LITERATURE BE TAUGHT?

The above question may sound silly, particularly to teachers who have been "teaching literature" for years. It would have sounded silly to me before I read Northrup Frye's statement that "the difficulty often felt in 'teaching literature' arises from the fact that it cannot be done: the criticism of literature is all that can be directly taught. Literature is not a subject of study, but an object of study."[1] Yet many of us still try to teach literature as a subject of study, and in so doing we lose sight of the fact that our students should leave us with a literary enthusiasm rather than the literary antagonism which students often develop. Perhaps the English teacher should, right after brushing his teeth in the morning, tell himself as a reminder, "Only .000473% of my high school students will ever become literary critics when they leave school. The rest will read newspapers, magazines, comic books, cookbooks, manuals, menus, and—if I can somehow succeed with them—perhaps a little bit of quality literature."

I am not sure that literary appreciation can be taught. It comes about largely through infection. The teacher who is really fired up about poetry, the one who does handsprings when he reads Dickey or Ferlinghetti or Brooks, the one who arranges poetry fairs in his school, the one who really wants his students to write and who helps them to get their stuff in print, the one who drives all night in a snow storm to hear a Ginsberg

reading in a town 200 miles away, the one who goes around the community sniffing out people who write and swapping manuscripts with them, can infect his students. The teacher who decides on a three-week poetry unit, Wheatley ("We must begin to recognize black poets")-to-Frost ("I never had a course in college that went past Frost")-at-the-gallop, punctuated by pop quizzes and other such impedimenta, will kill poetry for any healthy kid. And a poetically sensitive kid would do well to get himself suspended from school before embarking on any such obscenity as this.

SO WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE ME?

The reader may well be asking this question by now. I cannot answer it. You have to answer it for yourself. Maybe it leaves you up a tree. Maybe it leaves you poised to infect your kids with a zeal for poetry that you would not have believed could exist in them. Maybe it leaves you on the brink of a new teaching experience or something even broader than that.

What I *can* do is suggest various means of getting kids into poetry and, through this, perhaps more broadly into literature. I can tell you what has worked for me and for teachers I've worked with. Then you can discard the things that you know won't work for you and try the ones that stand a chance of working with the kids you are teaching.

GET THEM TO HAVE A FAVORITE POET

Flood your classroom with all the poetry you can find. Read lots of it aloud. Play poetry, including popular songs sung by Roberta Flack, Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins and other such performers, as well as poetry readings, on the phonograph. Encourage your kids to sing. Urge them to read. Surround them with poetry and music and art.

Then try to get each kid to find one poet he really vibrates to. And don't wince if he picks Robert Service or Edgar Guest. Let him find his own poet and get to know as much about this poet as he can. Let him do a section of bulletin board on this poet. Give him class time to tell his classmates about his poet.

When he has done this, encourage him to discover a poet; that is, encourage him to find someone in his family, school, community, or church who writes and is willing to let him see what he is writing. I have been discovering poets for years, many of them now published poets who have gained considerable recognition. This interest, developed very early, had led to my publishing two volumes of poetry by poets virtually unknown when I first knew them.[2] It has led me to help unpublished poets find places to publish their work. It has led me to establishing literary relationships which have been very rewarding to me. Much of my enthusiasm for poetry is attributable to the fact that early in my own life, I came to see poetry as a living, vital force.

You might ask, "Where can a kid find poets?" My answer is, "Anywhere and everywhere." My most recent find was in Kings Mountain,

North Carolina where I recently discovered Helen Cornwell Logan, who has been writing for years, but who has not published. I am convinced that she will be heard from in future years, but a small sampling of her poems will speak more eloquently here than I can:[3]

Death

They walk in and out of my room,
the ones so concerned with my dying.
I hear their murmurings from afar off
words hanging, sideways and crossways,
Taking up so much space.
What senile turn of mind sends me
hustling back through happy years
Only to know these clutching hands
and gasping breath are
mine?

Institution by Day

The sun comes up in the world of the living
And the world of the living dead.
Through taut mesh screens the sun's first rays
Shimmer like stubble of ripe wheat spray blazing
On golden hair, silver hair,
And for a fleeting moment, as though with tenderness,
Forms a soft halo.
Soon the ruthless beams make clear the time and place.
Broken dreams lie in deep pools of staring eyes.
Tender caressing hands clutch for the one hand
That could stop their trembling,
Boney arms entwine a lost-forever child as the
Babbling, crooning lullaby shrills into screams of anguish.
The dry, tasteless hours move with the drag
Of heavy hungering in the shared living hell.
Ominous silence, hypocrisy, selfishness wove the
Short cords that made the rope for these
Sensitive hearts.

The Veneer of Words

Truth was all I asked—
And in taking it from you
I was stripped of all pretense.
Veneer, that held truth so shining, left a zig-zag crack
I will forever try to fill with words that never hold again.

Brass Ring

As the carousel turns
the brass ring swings
across my hand.
I dare not grasp it.
Every ring holds within its hollow shape
My dreams.
Swinging—I know no answer.
Grasping—my heart may break.

Let a kid find a poet and his conversion to poetry will be well along the way. Bring a poet to school, and kids will see poetry as something alive and vigorous.[4]

GET THEM TO WRITE POETRY

A poetry workshop can do wonders for kids. Space limitations forbid my describing in detail how such workshops can operate successfully, although two of my articles[5] describe in step-by-step detail the procedures which I have found successful in running such workshops.

Within the individual English classroom, teachers can easily get kids to write poetry by structuring the experience for them. One imaginative teacher, Miss Deborah Goodwyn of Greenwood Senior High School in Greenwood, South Carolina, got excellent results from kids who vowed that they couldn't write poetry simply by giving them ten minutes to fill in the blanks in the following:

Contentment sounds like

Contentment feels like

Contentment looks like

Contentment tastes like

Contentment smells like

Contentment is

This sort of exercise, which should be shared with the class, is a good beginning toward helping the student get to the song within, which is essentially what a poem is.

From this, one can move to the writing of cinquains, haiku, or that beguiling form invented by Iris M. Tiedt, the diament. All of these forms are sufficiently structured to provide for the unsure writer a framework within which to work. And the kid who begins to write, even if his attempts are less than inspired, will increase his awareness of poetic form and hence his appreciation of poetry.

The teacher should also find means of printing student work, even if he does so in some simple form such as a mimeographed anthology of classroom poetry, hopefully illustrated by some student art work.

RESPONSE TO POETRY

Very often we do not encourage kids to respond honestly to poetry. Alan Purves, in one of the most valuable books on motivation to be written in many a year,[6] lists as a major teaching objective in a response-centered program that "an individual will feel secure in his response to a poem and not be dependent on someone else's response. An individual will trust himself."

Also, the teacher may well wish to adopt a value-oriented approach to teaching poetry, such as that suggested by Raths, Harmin, and Simon.[7] Such an approach involves the preparation of value sheets. The

student would perhaps read two poems—Simon suggests, for example, Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade," containing the words "Ours is not to reason why . . . Ours is but to do or die," and e. e. cummings' "next to god america," containing the words "what could be more beautiful than these heroic happy dead . . . they did not stop to think; they died instead." He would then quote four brief statements by famous people about patriotism, some drastically different from the others. Then he would ask the students to discuss the poems in relation to the statements and also to answer such questions as "Which statement sounds most like the things you have been taught about patriotism?" "Which statement might lead to the best world if everyone adopted it?" "Which statement might lead to the least desirable world if everyone adopted it?" "According to the definition you most like, are *you* patriotic? You might want to state your own definition of patriotism."

The value-orientation will give students something to talk about and to write about, and the something will be related to literature but will not force literary criticism upon the student. Rather, it will help him to use poetry to illumine current issues about which he has thought and to which he has reacted.

MAKE IT GUTSY

Most kids who say they hate poetry are talking about poetry which they can't relate to. Most poets worth their salt, regardless of when they lived, are young rebels, but we often teach them as doddering graybeards. Poetry has always been gutsy. *The Beowulf*, *The Nibelungenlied*, the Scandanavian Eddas spoke directly, graphically, masculinely to hearty folk who clustered around to listen. If kids are to accept poetry, it must first be presented to them by hearty folk who select hearty poems and present them lustily to kids who are waiting to be shown that poetry is not effete, sentimental, and inconsequential.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1968, pp. 11-12.

2. *Nine Black Poets*, Durham, North Carolina: Moore Publishing Company, 1968, and *A Galaxy of Black Writing*, Durham, North Carolina: Moore Publishing Company, 1970.

3. These poems, printed here for the first time, are presented with the express permission of Helen Cornwell Logan who controls all rights on them.

4. Rex M. Lambert, a twenty-year-old who has published some poetry, tells of his highly productive poetry sessions with high school kids in "Poetry Readings in the Classroom," *English Journal*, LXI (May 1972), pp. 677-679, 714.

5. "A Poetry Workshop for the Upper Elementary Grades," *Elementary English*, LI (November 1973) and "Teasing Writing Out of High School Students," to be published in *English Journal* late in 1973 or early in 1974.

6. *How Porcupines Make Love: Notes on a Response-Centered Curriculum*, Lexington, Massachusetts: Xerox College Publishing, 1972.

7. See *Values and Teaching*, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1966.

Teaching Folk-Rock

KEN WEBER

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Every teacher has at least a dozen unforgettable former students. One of mine telephones me faithfully every spring. I last taught him four years ago when he was in grade nine. Although he is an incurable cynic, and has been since the age of three, he has a depth of perception that has always disturbed and delighted his teachers.

Just prior to his most recent call, there had been an "incident" at his school which attracted the Toronto papers. Ever hungry for damaging news about the local schools, the papers, one in particular, seemed to suggest that total revolt is imminent, not only for that school but for the whole system. My young friend's analysis of the "incident" was marked by his customary insight:

> Everybody is backing off; the principal and the V.P.'s don't push discipline very much. Seniors don't have to go to class unless they want to. Nobody passes out any more if you don't have homework done. Even exams aren't as important. Everything's easier.
>
> Now this is fine! Like, it's about time we got *human* treatment; but the whole thing is going to blow up! The teachers are doing the same old crap they always have, only now there's nothing *forcing* the kids to go along with it. The same old meaningless stuff! We're bored!

These comments are incisive, especially from someone as intimately involved as a student naturally is. But they are not original. For some time now, good teachers have been perfectly aware of the problem my friend outlined, and many are doing something about it. Film, television, and other media are now a part of many English courses. Evaluation, research, inquiry, *thinking*, are replacing memorization as the dominant classroom modes. Treatment of the contemporary idiom in our culture now gives us, both teachers and students, the advantages of studying ourselves in our own environment, while at the same time, adding a new level of relevance to the traditional elements on which our courses have always been based.

It is the combination of traditional and contemporary in poetry particularly which has always excited my students and me. Folk and rock songs along with traditional poetry provide a dynamic experience in the classroom.[1] But as with any other element in teaching, there are certain ideas, of folk-rock easier and more interesting.

Generally I have found that poetry, i.e. traditional poetry and folk-rock, belong in a unit together. Teaching them in entirely separate units or as separate courses seemed to me to reinforce what Postman calls the Vaccination Theory of Education,[2] namely, that a subject is something you "take", and once you have taken it you have "had" it, never to get it

again. After all, folk-rock and traditional poetry are partners not aliens, and belong together.

A second generalization is almost insultingly obvious: that teaching folk-rock requires both the lyrics and the music. The music alone usually generates a purely emotive response. (And I'm not suggesting this is bad; there is too little emotion in our classrooms. But education one would hope, involves more than emotion alone.) On the other hand, to examine the lyrics without ever including the music in denying a song its integrity. This is like studying a film without projecting it.

In a purely practical vein, I have always found tape recorders better than record players. As for recordings, the best source is the students, especially if you suffer from the anemic budget that I inevitably faced. Never once have I failed to get a specific record, whether 45 r.p.m. single, or album.

Finally, if your students are given to writing poetry, as happily, so many of them are today, folk-rock in your classroom will be a great stimulus. It seems to have just the right degree of mood, intellectual probing, and above all, relevance to young people, for calling forth the urge for artistic expression. What follows are suggestions based partly on a few happy experiences and many mistakes, but mostly on what my students taught me.

Teaching an individual song does not have to differ greatly in method from teaching individual poems. The Beatles' *Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds*, for example, develops mood and theme through diction, imagery, and rhythm just like any poem. *Lucy in The Sky* invites us to see and enjoy the world through the fresh uninhibited view of a child—an invitation conveyed in a series of simple but concrete images, juxtaposed in such a way that they are at once incongruous and compatible. Whether you and your students talk about *diction*, or *imagery*, or *theme*, will probably depend on the way you normally teach poetry. Again, whether you find Lucy to be a symbol, or whether the title becomes a suggestion revealed in its key letters, will depend on the nature of the class discussion.

The key distinction of course, is that in folk-rock there is the music, and this aspect usually lends a two-fold dimension to a poetry lesson.

The first dimension is artistic: the music of *Lucy in The Sky* expresses the same theme and develops the same mood as the lyrics, carrying us through the vision of the piece. It establishes pace, connects the images, and ties everything together for a total grasp of the song's expression. Usually, if the music is playing softly as the students come in, they are in effect "set up" for the experience. (Playing the music as they enter, also precludes a sense of awkward self-consciousness I have sometimes detected.)

The second dimension is more difficult to explain, but it seems to grow out of the first. Essentially it is a factor that combines pedagogy, emotion and intellect. Because folk-rock is of their world, students are ready,

willing, and very able to deal with it. This factor, probably more than any other, makes it such a pleasure in the classroom.

An interesting approach is to compare folk-rock songs and poems in pairs that express a similar idea, or treat the same incident. The study of songs inevitably generates an increased—and sincere—interest in traditional poetry, and comparisons like these often provoke some worthwhile thinking. One of my favorite pairs is Langston Hughes' *Birmingham Sunday* and Jerry Moore's *Ballad of Birmingham* (lyrics by Dudley Randall). Both poem and ballads are about the horrible dynamiting of the church in Alabama in 1963, in which four little girls were killed at Sunday School. Each piece evokes a particular response by approaching the incident in a particular way. Irony, diction, imagery, narrative view, all combine to grab and hold a reader. But again there is the music, adding another level of comparison. Students are quick to argue the relative merits of song versus poem as to which is more evocative. Nor do they automatically support song as the better vehicle.

Still another result—for which I was unprepared the very first time I tried this—is the students' eagerness to read the poem *aloud* in an attempt to discover how different readings of a poem compare with a song.

Naturally, this kind of comparison done once, invites more and students can go on to such pairs as Pete Seeger's *Talking Union* and Edgar Lee Master's *Butch Weldy;* Buffy Sainte-Marie's *Universal Soldier*, and Comming's *I Sing Of Olaf* or Owen's *Arms and The Boy;* Joni Mitchell's *Marcie* and Amy Lowell's *Patterns.*

Yet another treatment of folk-rock and poetry that seems to grow naturally out of the comparison idea, is the theme study, a less intensive examination of individual works, in favor of a broader look at as many works as possible.

My students' favorite theme, and I'm sure everyone's, has always been love. Such works as *Black is The Color* (preferably as sung by Joan Baez), *Song of Solomon* from the Bible, Shakespearean sonnets, Byron's poems, the songs of Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen, as well as the songs of rock groups like U.S. of A. suggest an infinity of ideas.

e.g. Is poetry more intellectually demanding than song?

Can you detect a common pattern of imagery in expressions of love, be they folk, poem, or rock?

Can a singer manipulate a song to give it his own meaning? Can a reader of poetry do the same?

What comparisons can you find in expressions of love from various points in literary history?

. . . and these are just a few of the possibilities.

It would seem that part of the answer to the problem my cynical young friend has posed, does lie in bringing contemporary idiom like folk-rock to the classroom. For even he would agree that the greatest sin in education is to stand utterly still. Naturally, there are arguments raised against this. The "culture-heritage" school argues that much of the contemporary material must be aesthetically impure, that we are leading

students from, rather than toward the greatness in our culture. Indeed it would be foolish to assume that *all* folk and *all* rock songs are good. After all they have not yet gone through the distillation-survival process of Time. Sometimes their merit lies only in the expression of a contemporary, vital issue. But if a folk-rock song leads a student to think and to feel, or if it leads him to established works of art, then it has served him well.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a presentation of the aesthetic relationships of poetry and folk-rock see Hogan, *Poetry of Relevance*. (Methuen Publications, Agincourt, Ontario) approaches, practical matters and so on, that often help to make the study

2. Adapted from Postman & Weingartner, *Teaching As A Subversive Activity*, (Delacorte Press, New York)

3. For further thematic outlines of folk-rock and poetry, see *Poetry of Relevance*, pp. 238-242.

Approaches to Teaching Poetry

LAUREL LADEVICH

Reviewer
ERIC/RCS

TEACHING BY GENRE

Cleanth Brooks, in an essay on "The Importance of Poetry," suggests that in a world in which language is beginning to break down under the strain of public doublespeak, perhaps the most important function of our schools is to train students in the disciplined and responsible use of language, for if they do not understand how language works, they are likely to become the victims of those who do. According to Brooks, poetry is "language charged with meaning." Through the study of poetry students can be made more sensitive to and aware of the uses of language. Brooks also asserts that there is a natural response to qualities of language inherent in poetry, such as meter, rhyme, and alliteration.

Since apathy is not one of the natural responses to which Brooks was referring, the question must be raised as to why most poetry education at the high school level is received with either passive disinterest or active resistance. Many of us have had the experience of disregarding certain literature or poetry as valueless and at a future time discovering that the same piece of literature has a profound influence on our imaginative powers. Although response to sophisticated literature is often dependent upon our cumulative experience in literature and life, a positive response can often be elicited by an enthusiastic teacher anxious to disclose to his students the essence and relevance of a work which they might have otherwise overlooked. For this reason Stephen Dunning, in *Teaching Literature to Adolescents: Poetry* [ED 042 769, 119p.], warns teachers to avoid poems for which they have no personal enthusiasm. He also urges

that students be allowed to choose the poetry they will study. Approaches to teaching poetry, such as reading poems chorally or stimulating student awareness of the interrelationship between exterior and interior form, are presented.

In his doctoral dissertation, "The Effect of Author Biography upon the Comprehension and Appreciation of Poetry," Larry Andews determined that the inclusion of biographical information about the authors of poems contributed greatly to students' appreciation of poems but did not significantly affect comprehension. In an article contained in *Issues in the Teaching of Poetry* [NCTE Stock Number 03203, 68p.], Michael J. Cardone also advocates the use of biographical and external evidence in the study of poetry.

The most effective source of biographical information is obviously the author himself. Galen Williams has compiled *A Partial Directory of American Poets* [Free on request from: Literature Program Director, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. 20506, 156p.], which lists contemporary national poets, as well as fiction writers and playwrights, who are willing to work with high-school age or younger students in the schools. A service section lists related materials for the instruction of poetry, such as anthologies, films, recordings, magazines, lists of publishing houses, and information on how to obtain videotapes. Inviting a poet or novelist into the classroom would provide a unique opportunity for the student to observe and learn from an experienced writer and very possibly arouse much more enthusiasm for poetry than could be generated in any other way.

Several programs attempt novel approaches to teaching poetry. *Introduction to Poetry* [ED 065 874, 20p.], a Dade County Quinmester course, puts its emphasis on the enjoyment of poetry. Student performance objectives include: writing an original, personal definition of the term of poetry; defining a list of terms germane to poetry; identifying figures of speech as to type; and writing one or more original examples of the figures of speech studied in class. Course content covers authors and poems representing major American and British writers from the romantic and transitional periods and from the modern era, including black poetry. *Poetry-Teaching Tools* [ED 034 799, 8p.] presents three game approaches to the teaching of poetry, designed to make students actively involved with poems. The semantico-dictionary or word-cross game involves programming techniques, logic, and lexicography in poetic analysis. The punched-out poem game involves filling in the blanks of a poem in which all the words supplied act as cues. The poem-paradigm game uses traditional sentence outlining to show how subparts are interrelated.

Mass media and particularly film, have been used very effectively for teaching poetry. Jack Cameron and Emma Plattor, in *The Literate in an Age of Mass Media* [ED 032 208, 7p.], assert that multisensory stimuli enhance the excitement and drama of the written page and are essential to a concept of literacy broad enough to encompass all aspects of critical

and creative communication. Two projects involving the use of motion pictures and tape recordings to complement poetry are discussed. The first project planned a film and soundtrack for chosen poems; the second used haiku written by the students, as haiku lends itself to the multimedia approach. *Using Film with Poetry: A Unit Approach* [ED 049 248, 8p.], by Raymond Lemley, suggests four short, inexpensive films used in conjunction with specific poems in order to illustrate the theme of man and his relationship to other men. "Two Castles" depicts the foolhardiness of pride and is recommended for use in teaching an introductory unit on poetry. "The Wall" presents different men's reactions to obstacles and is suggested to accompany Frost's "Mending Wall." Norman McLaren's "Neighbors" is an allegorical film on man's inhumanity to man and is suggested in conjunction with several poems. The final film, "Vivre," a depiction of the horrors of war, is recommended because of the strong reactions it elicits from student audiences.

Rock music can also be used to illustrate central themes in poetry. Jean Sisk's *Making T. S. Eliot Relevant* [ED 032 301, 9p.] describes a program for advanced eleventh and twelfth grade students. It is suggested that Simon and Garfunkel's "Dangling Conversation" be used to introduce students to the isolation and ineffectuality of "The Hollow Men." A comparison between what students expect to find in a love song and what they find in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" can lead the students into the message of Eliot's poem. Lyrics in rock music can be studied as poetic forms. In another Quinmester course, *Modern Rock Poetry* [ED 065 882, 17p.], students examine and analyze themes and techniques of the rock poet in the lyrics of modern rock music.

Poetry writing by students can not only help the student to identify with the experience and the form of poetry but can also increase the student's command of language. Brian Powell, in *English through Poetry Writing: A Creative Approach for Schools* [F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 136p.], presents a program designed to encourage students to systematically and accurately transform their experiences into brief expression. The program is divided into introductory and advanced sections. Each section is composed of units on the forms of poetry, the content of poetry, and methods of evaluating it. Sample topics of exercises are Ezra Pound couplets, haiku, sources of inspiration, themes from the arts, a framework for evaluation, and personal assessment. The advanced section has an additional unit on principles for preparing and guiding the student in creative work.

Because of the popularity and usefulness in including haiku in the teaching and understanding of poetry, teachers might find *Haiku in Western Languages: An Annotated Bibliography* by Gary Brower and David Foster [Scarecrow Press, 133p.] helpful.

The preceding documents are representative of some of the recent materials available through the ERIC system on the teaching of poetry in the secondary schools. More may be found by scanning the pages of the monthly issue of the *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE) and

Research in Education (RIE). You may purchase complete copies of the ERIC documents mentioned in this article in either microfiche (MF) or hardcopy (HC) from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), P. O. Drawer O, Bethesda, Maryland 20014. Orders must specify quantity, ED number, and kind of reproduction desired, MF or HC. MF costs $0.65 per document; HC costs $3.29 per 100 pages.

FOOTNOTES

1. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills is sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. ERIC's objective is to keep educators informed about current developments in education.

Focus on an Elective Program: Twentieth Century Lyrical Poetry

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TEACHING BY GENRE

There is a type of English elective program which has existed in various forms for years. This program consists of courses which are offered in addition to the regular English curriculum, so they are in that sense, truly elective. For those interested in developing an elective system, this type may serve as a transitional or even trial phase for the program. In order to see how such an approach might be implemented, let us trace the development of the English curriculum within a "traditional" high school.

Some years ago this school's English department felt a need to improve upon its English curriculum. At first, its teachers attempted to do this by tacking on—for seniors only—two additional required periods of English class a week. However, after implementing and experimenting with this program for just one year, it was decided that increased quantity of "the same old stuff" was not the answer. So they abandoned this project.

It was the very next year that the department chairman had a new idea, and that was to use those extra required periods of English and transform them into elective periods—open to the entire three-year high school. The seniors and anybody else could use two periods (or more) that would otherwise have been used for study halls for the purpose of pursuing English courses which appealed to them.

One might imagine that the scheduling problems of this less extensive type of program would also be diminished; but, in fact, quite a lot of juggling was necessary to accommodate the changes which would be

made. As usual, though, administration and guidance personnel worked the problems out in a satisfactory manner.

Much to the credit of the department chairman, the program was formulated efficiently and passed along for student consideration in time for scheduling, so that the program would take effect during the next school year. First, the chairman had called a meeting of the English staff, to whom he outlined the proposal. Then, after sufficient time had been given for the consideration of the plan, he asked each staff member which elective or electives he would be willing to teach. Next, course descriptions were drawn up; also, the credits and number of meetings per week were decided upon. And before the scheduling procedure became a reality, the list of these courses was presented enthusiastically to students in their English classes, along with appropriate explanation by the teacher.

When the student responses were tallied, only five of eight possible courses were found popular enough to offer. But this still necessitated the addition of a faculty member and approval by the local Board of Education, which was accomplished. Students had also indicated the desirability of a course which had not been listed on the survey; hence Creative Writing was offered, but not until the second year of the program. The other courses which were to be offered included Supplemental English (designed especially for business students as an over-all review drill of the mechanics of grammar), Dramatics (a course offering sections on the history, interpretation, and production of drama), Public Speaking, Research Seminar (designed to improve student skills in the production of a research paper without having to write the paper itself), and Twentieth Century Lyrical Poetry (a fancy name for the analysis of the lyrics of contemporary songs). The first three mentioned would meet five times per week for a semester; the latter two courses would contain two sections of students each semester. These classes would meet twice a week.

A final note in the organization of the program is that the procedure for grading was to be determined by the individual teacher after discussion of the matter with his students. One of the encouraging aspects of the program was that, when asked about the means of grading and the criteria for doing so, the students did not much care. They had elected to take an additional English course and they were not to be concerned about grades; they did want to learn.

Class size in the various electives varied; however, on the whole, they were much smaller than usual. To gain a more familiar, intense perspective, let us look at one of these courses to gain insight into how an elective course might be conducted. For example, the fifth elective has an interesting title—Twentieth Century Lyrical Poetry. Realizing that this will consider the lyrics of contemporary songs, one would imagine that this would attract students of today. And, in two semesters, a total of about fifty students elected this course. Because there were four sections, the average class size was approximately twelve—a desirable student-teacher ratio by almost any standards.

But what did they do in class? Sit around and listen to records all day? What a waste of time and the taxpayer's money! Well, as was suggested, let's take a closer look.

On a typical day, Mr. Martin (a fictitious name) comes into the classroom lugging one of the department's record players. Then Mr. Martin sets some mimeographed sheets down upon Joan's desk; the teacher busies himself with the record player as the student distributes the copies of "For What It's Worth" by the Buffalo Springfield. Who's she? Or maybe the song was "Catch the Wind" by Donovan or "Wooden Ships" by Crosby, Stills, and Nash or "I Am a Rock" by Simon and Garfunkel or lyrics from *Tommy*, the rock opera written and sung by The Who. By *whom?*

Do not be surprised if these titles and names are not at your command. It is not really expected that they be. However, they are in many of the students' minds and in these lyrics can be found experiences that they can identify with. So often educators talk about approaching the learning "where the students are." Well, this is where many of them are. Do you personally know any high school student who locks himself up in his room just to listen to the words and music of his generation? Perhaps the better question would be, do you know any who do not?

Back again to the classroom. An unusual situation there as you would suspect. It is not any of those titles which have been placed on the phonograph; rather it is "Requiem for the Masses," as performed by The Association. Joan was particularly interested in this song because they were singing an arrangement in choir. If they were singing it in choir, it must be all right. Then, let's proceed.

"Anything in particular suggestive about the title?" Joan asks. She does not ask the teacher, mind you. She asks the other members of the circle. (They are actually seated in a circle.)

"Well, *requiem* suggests peace or rest or somethin' like that, doesn't it?" asks Al as he tests his thoughts.

"Yeah, and mass could probably have two meanings," pipes in George. "It could be like the Catholics have in church or maybe it refers to a mass of people."

"But I think the music definitely labels the mass as the former variety. It sounds just like that mournful music they play in church." Nancy had blurted this idea, anxious to share what she rightfully believed to be an insightful thought.

"I still think it could refer to both kinds of masses," counters George. "Kind of like a pun. You know, a play on words. I think you'll see what I mean as we examine the rest of the song."

The students are quite ready to get into the poem by this time; Joan senses this and, since she is in charge, asks a leading question regarding the first line. In this case, she merely asks quite simply, "Does anyone know the meaning of *Requiem aeternam?*" She already knows the answer because as leader for the day, it is her responsibility to have considered the lyrics carefully. She also has a tentative hypothesis in mind

regarding the overall meaning because she has studied the interrelationships of lines, phrases, and words. But, not being too sure of herself, she will wait to see if her theory holds up under the examination of her classmates.

It is discovered that Mike did know the meaning of *Requiem aeternam* (eternal repose); but his is in choir, too, so that was kind of cheating. Fortunately, except for a few lines, the poem which the students continue to discuss is not in Latin but in English. But they observe that the few Latin phrases which are woven in are there for the mass-like effect.

One might ask himself where Mr. Martin has been all this time. He is right there as a member of the circle; he speaks occasionally, but usually he just sits there—apparently thinking. And when his voice is heard, most frequently he elaborates on a point that has already been made—or he asks a question to further investigate a supposition or comment that has been put forth by one of the others.

The students go on discussing the individual lines, phrases, and words of the poem while resisting the temptation to jump ahead. In the case of most good poetry, the various elements within the poem build into an overall effect which is obvious at the end of their examination. This particular poem is twenty-four lines long; however, a forty-four minute period is not enough time today to bring the discussion to a conclusion. The class will have to wait until next time for the consummation, but the review necessary at the beginning of the succeeding class might reinforce some of the points which have been suggested today. And that is quite all right with the members of the circle.

One might properly observe that this is indeed a very unusual type of English class. *Is* it an English class? Mr. Martin definitely thinks it is. In his opinion, in fact, it is the best English class that he has ever "taught." He uses that word "taught" in heavy quotation marks because, as one has observed, he does not do much "teaching." At the beginning of the course, he distributed some of his own examples of lyrical poetry for the examination of the class. And he exposed them to various poetic techniques. But that is not what he considers most important; it is rather that he sees in his class students directly discussing various aspects of the language within the poems. He sees and shares in the communication of thoughts and ideas which are produced at the students' level. Most of the "work" is oral and is done in class; but the student who leads the discussion of a particular poem is responsible for submitting a written analysis of that work at the end of class discussion. The student is evaluated on an honors-pass-fail basis; but, as was suggested earlier, the grade is definitely not a primary consideration.

Thus we have a different sort of class which emphasizes oral communication and language analysis; the written work is secondary, but nevertheless important in crystallizing the student's thoughts. A different sort of class but definitely an English class.

This is not to say that one's English experience should be developed entirely around Twentieth Century Lyrical Poetry; this was never the

intention. This course was designed to foster interest in a particular realm of English and to supplement a student's knowledge through a study of related topical concern. The excitement and enthusiasm of the students who took the course were obvious; the students' expectations were fulfilled in almost every case, and there is much evidence that they shared this attitude with their peers. They had been enrolled within a course which they had chosen (to the exclusion of two study halls in most cases), and theirs was an enjoyable learning experience. But you are not supposed to enjoy learning . . .

Unfortunately, there is not sufficient time to pay a visit to the other elective classes. But, undoubtedly, each would be unique in itself. There is no universal prescription for creating the ideal learning situation; it is always determined by the relationship of the students with one another and with the teacher.

Should the program which has been described be labeled an elective program? Are not the electives peripheral to the bulk of English instruction? Mr. Martin thinks that this elective program is for real. And he would even suggest a few modifications. He really believes that his Lyrical Poetry class was the highlight of his day. He could almost feel the learning taking place; the atmosphere was vibrant. But Mr. Martin would like to see other electives included in the curriculum. The formulation and the planning and the implementation of another course within his areas of interest are exciting prospects. Perhaps (but maybe this is dreaming) the traditional English class could meet just three or four times a week to accommodate the additional courses. In that way, the Board would not have to approve more money. An interesting prospect.

At any rate, it must be concluded that the electives in addition to the regular curriculum is a viable plan. The program may not relate to the needs of all students, but at least it relates to some. It is a start in the direction of meeting the student where his interests are and making his school experience more meaningful.

Hoffman and Poe: Masters of the Grotesque

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TEACHING BY GENRE

Most high school students enjoy reading the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe. The active imaginations of these teenagers respond to the grotesque tales of terror, suspense, and horror. For such students, the tales of the German Romanticist, E. T. A. Hoffman, can provide hours of enjoyable reading and, at the same time, offer a rich introduction to the study of literature from a comparative viewpoint.

Few students recognize that Poe was not unique in what he did. Considerable evidence exists to support the supposition that Poe was, in fact, directly influenced by the works of Hoffman, particularly in the writing of his *Tales*. Palmer Cobb[1] presents one of the strongest arguments that Poe borrowed heavily from the published works of Hoffman. The most direct influence noted is in Poe's treatment of the theme of double existence in "William Wilson." This particular theme was a favorite of Hoffman, who included it in his stories "The Doubles," "Kater Murr," and "The Devil's Elixir." Poe's story appears to be an adaptation of "The Doubles," which also is credited as having influenced Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The ancestral curse of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" can be traced directly to Hoffman's "The Legacy," which is also said to have influenced Hawthorne's works. Poe's "Mesmeric Revelations" and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" both depend heavily on the treatment of hypnotism to achieve the desired effect. Again, the treatment is similar to that in "The Mesmerist," an earlier work by Hoffman. Mesmerism and metempsychosis are joined in "The Mesmerist," and they also appear in union in Poe's "The Tale of the Ragged Mountains." The selfishness of art in Poe's "The Oval Portrait" is treated in much the same manner as Hoffman treated it in "Berthold, the Madman," and the lovers in "The Assignation" are strikingly like those in Hoffman's "Doge and Dogaressa."

Interesting though it be, the theory of direct influence does not provide the only explanation to the striking resemblances in the works of the two men. It is just as possible that both Poe and Hoffman were products of German Romanticism. Writers do not produce their works in a vacuum. They are constantly reacting to varied influences within the artistic world. It has been said that the movement of Romanticism in Germany reached its culmination in the works of Hoffman. The same appears to be true of Poe. Both artists are masters of the supernatural grotesque; both were disciples of that phase of romanticism which had as its dominant note terror of the uncanny; both were tantalized by the hope of solving or guessing the secrets of a world beyond the comprehension of human intelligence.

The strivings of men making a desperate attempt to achieve a sense of identity in a hostile, absurd world are forcefully depicted in the works of these two men. Forerunners of in-depth psychology, the works express through the re-creation of psychic states many of the deep-seated neuroses of modern man. Through flights into the world of dreams and the magical realm of the supernatural, Hoffman and Poe take their readers beyond the range of human intelligence into the psychic realm of the soul, where they find exposed the darker aspects of man's nature. Therefore, at a time when the secrets of the human mind constitute one of the few mysteries not yet laid bare by science, a study of the works of these two authors can help students to understand man better.

An investigation into the lives of Hoffman and Poe reveals many similarities in the backgrounds and personalities of the two men and also

provides students with some insight into the situation of the artist in conflict with society. Both Hoffman and Poe were unhappy most of their lives. Both of them sought escape from the real world into the world of the imagination. Both of them substituted relationships with very young girls for passionate, worldly relationships with women their own ages, and both of them drank heavily to dull the disappointments and terror that they felt. Hoffman was afraid of some of the very characters he created; Poe was tortured by some morbid sense of impending doom. Yet the works that these writers produced are not the deliriums of alcoholics or madmen. Although Hoffman was considered mad by many people, he had gained most of his knowledge of the behavior of neurotics by observing such behavior directly in a mental hospital at which a friend of his practiced psychiatry. His stories can be studied as the analysis of his own personality, because the characters in many of them are personifications of aspects of that personality. Many of the stories of Poe can also be understood better when one is aware of the biographical data supporting the story.

The discovery of such strong similarities in the works of Poe and Hoffman need not negate the value of Poe's work, for the real contribution that Poe made was in his conscious use of the form of the short story. He reduced the tales that Hoffman had written to their very essence and thus increased the emotional intensity and the unity of the works. Thus, the student who studies the works comparatively comes also to a better understanding of the individuality of the style of any writer.

For example, if Hoffman's "The Sandman" is used in conjunction with a study of Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart," the student experiences two expressions of the state of mind of a neurotic. In the Poe story, the old man watches the murderer with his vulture's eye which had driven the madman to take the life of the man he loved, the man who had done him no wrong:

> . . . I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture —a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

In Hoffman's tale, the young Nathaneal is frightened by a nurse's story that the Sandman is

> . . . a wicked man who comes to children when they won't go to bed and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes, so that they pop all bloody out of their heads; then he throws them into a sack and carries them to the half-moon as food for his children; the children sit there in a nest and have crooked beaks like owls with which they gobble up the eyes of human children who have been naughty.[2]

He is thus tormented by nightmares of the Sandman who appears to him in the guise of Coppelius, an old lawyer who was a close friend of his father, and later as Giuseppe Coppola, a Piedmontese mechanic who sells

barometers. For years he is plagued by the insidious presence of this demon. His inner strife, clearly depicted by Hoffman as a gradually increasing inability to differentiate the real from the unreal,[2] finally drives him to attempt to murder the innocent girl whom he has loved and to then throw himself from the tower of the town hall in the middle of the marketplace. The girl is saved by her brother; but Nathanael, when he catches sight of Coppelius once more, throws himself over the parapet shrieking "Ha, lovely eyes, lovely eyes."[3]

Hoffman's tale is long, and it involves many different characters. Poe's on the other hand, is extremely short and directly told. We meet only two characters, and one of these is a passive victim who cannot speak. The events are narrated by the madman who tells his story directly to the reader. Hoffman's tale is narrated by the main character, too, but it is broken up many times by the introduction of letters to and from Nathanael, Klara (his love), and Lothar (her brother, who saves her from Nathanael). Yet in both works the reader can see the destruction of man through some malignant power within himself. The study of this particular tale can be further supplemented by that portion of the recording of Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffman* to reinforce the students' grasp of the nature of the Romantic movement in Germany.

Often we approach the teaching of literature as if it were geography, offering courses in English Literature, American Literature, Southern Literature, Continental Literature, and World Literature. The humanities approach to the teaching of literature has enabled students to see the relatedness of the arts, and the thematic approach has furthered the concept that no idea is peculiar to the literature of a particular country. Yet little has been done to tap the rich field of Comparative Literature. I have found—and I believe that students will find—it exciting to see that movements in literature cross and recross both geographical and language boundaries. The artist is truly a citizen of the world. To feel this oneness in the literature of the world is to become, in a sense, a citizen of that world, and what could be more desirable from the study of any literature than the promotion in the reader of that same bond which artists have always felt.

Too often our curricula are constructed to enhance our own kind and to build up our collective ego, to restrict rather than to enlarge the world of the student. The comparative study of literature in the secondary school can help to remedy this situation.

FOOTNOTES

1. "The Influence of E. T. A. Hoffman on the Tales of Edgar Allan Poe," *Studies in Philology, Vol. III* (Chapel Hill: The University Press, 1908).

2. *The Tales of Hoffman*, trans. Michael Bullock (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co.), p. 3.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Plays: Shared and Seen

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When it came time to do *Julius Caesar* in class, it was springtime, and my thoughts turned to ways of maintaining the students' interest until the year's conclusion. My own experience with plays has usually been through theatre groups: as an apprentice at Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope, Pennsylvania, and in community groups around New Brunswick, New Jersey. It seems that solo readers miss much of the fun of the play form. Plays read silently may lose a great deal of meaning; unless the reader is equipped with an alert imagination and an adaptable inner voice, interpretation, intonation, and character interaction may be passed over. Reading plays aloud with a group of friends, seeing the plays in film or on stage, or listening to recordings are preferable activities to turning pages by oneself.

I considered an assignment around the play form with the following goals in mind:

1. Permit individualized reading
2. Appeal to wide reading interests and abilities
3. Encourage extensive reading to develop preferences
4. Induce students to share opinions about their reading, because of interest rather than question-answer discussions
5. Encourage formation of own opinion
6. Point out that plays are to be seen, heard and shared (all reading should be this way)
7. Help students learn to work together as a cohesive group, depending on each other for leadership and ideas rather than relying on the teacher as the sole source of information
8. Draw on diverse abilities often concealed in regular classroom activities

I asked students from two tenth grade English classes to hand in lists of any plays that they thought they would like to read. They could choose on the basis of recommendations, reviews, or by skimming scenes of individual plays. It was mentioned that we could perform some scenes from plays they particularly enjoyed. During the week we discussed basic plots of titles they suggested, and at the end of the week, we set up five possible groups: musical comedy, comedy, Shakespeare-comparative, absurd, and drama. Sample choices for each of these categories might be: musical comedy—*Fiddler on the Roof;* comedy—*Odd Couple;* Shakespeare-comparative—*Macbird* and *Macbeth;* absurd—*Dumbwaiter;* drama—*Black Girl.* Students signed up for their first, second and third committee choices, and nearly everyone got his first choice. The potential reading lists were revised by the individual groups and they each decided on ten readings. Although most students followed the list, if someone discovered a favorite author, he could pursue his interest. For students who

were not good readers, books of one-acts and of short radio plays enabled them to contribute and to develop interest in tackling the longer works. It was strongly recommended that the students read the plays together, taking parts (this, incidentally, helped poorer readers), listen to recordings (the public library had quite a collection), or see the plays.

It is more pleasurable to have students rush in with enthusiastic questions and comments on their reading rather than checking up on their work through book reports. The classes became places for lively exchange. "Did you read ?" "What did you think of ?" Everybody was reading something, and my traditional remark that we would have a test on this material seemed to have little to do with all the activity. Initially, I wondered what kind of test I could give. The students' natural curiosity developed challenging questions. For example, 1) "Why did Ionesco use a rhinoceros?"; 2) "Who is Godot and what are they waiting for?"; 3) "What do these lines mean?"; 4) "How does this character feel when he says these lines?" Another bonus was that students began to creatively provide alternatives for various characters' actions in their small group discussions. "Why doesn't he/she do this?" was often debated in the groups. Individual students offered to draw up costumes and several created lighting effects. Several groups organized and went to see their plays. Obviously, a formal testing situation was unnecessary.

We decided that each group would be given one period to entertain us. Specifically, the groups would choose a scene (minimum time: ten minutes) in which every person had a speaking part. For the remainder of the period they could do readings or have a panel discussion about the plays they had read. The performance entailed the following: memorization, attempt at characterization, use of costumes, lighting, make-up, scenery, and properties. The first year, the groups either picked one member to direct them or suggestions for movement were offered by the group as they discussed the scene. The second and third years, students from the elective drama class volunteered to serve as directors and were given their choice of group. In addition, individual drama class members gave lectures and demonstrations on make-up and guided many sophomores through their first performance. Besides encouraging his people, the drama teacher demonstrated the use of the light board, permitted students to rummage through his costumes, props, scenery, and opened the make-up chest for our use.

Since we were interested in doing an effective job, a lot of time outside of class was needed. We had already held our discussions of the plays before homeroom, during lunch and study hall, in the halls, and after school. It seemed worthwhile to continue on this schedule. Groups were assigned to practice two times a week at 7-8:15 a.m. and at 3:30-5 p.m. During these morning and afternoon sessions, three groups could rehearse at one time: one backstage, one onstage, and one in the hall. Groups of students who worked or participated in sports came in the morning.

During the three years not one parent complained. We did sometimes, though, especially toward the end.

The first year, after the closed performances for our class around the eleventh week of rehearsal, the students went "on the road" and shared their scenes with other classes. Some spent an entire day performing. In this way, they gained poise and experience in facing an audience. The following year, the high school purchased a closed circuit television, and student operators filmed the in-class productions. These films were useful in two ways. The day the group performed, they came after school to evaluate their work. The film also served as a permanent lesson which several students or I could travel with to various classes and use for discussion purposes. The teachers appreciated the innovation and the student feedback to my classes was tremendous. Besides being an ego-builder ("Hey, I saw you on t.v. today. You were great."), the films encouraged others to talk about and read the plays themselves.

After the week of in-class productions we voted on our own academy awards, such as most difficult play, best actress/actor, lighting, scenery, costumes, and so forth. The two or three best scenes were put on for a full house (about 700) of students, some of whom had never seen a live performance before. The ten or twelve students who were not directly involved in the selected casts sent out invitations, made up programs, and created posters for the event. During the performance itself they worked backstage or lent enthusiastic support as shills in the large audience.

People were amazed that the students ran the show by themselves from introducing the scenes to running the lights. Frankly, I was too nervous to go backstage. The students did not need my help anyway; they were troupers already. For example, one year, a lead character was absent from *Barefoot in the Park* cast on the performance day. The group asked another class member to fill-in with script-in-hand and they went on as if nothing had happened. Students need opportunities to create their own solutions.

Again, performance resulted in positive feedback. One teacher asked for an explanation of *Sandbox* by Albee because his class had deluged him with questions. Two students were dispatched to field questions from his class the next day. My classes were delighted with themselves.

Clearly, this assignment depends on group work. The students read and discuss the plays together and later, when practicing comment on each other's work. Often members of one group would come to watch another. The amount of work they did was amazing. Beyond getting acquainted with many plays, they learned a lot about themselves and each other. The experiences of working together and assuming and sharing the leadership were invaluable; these are important dividends for any student. This activity involves students in the pleasures of communicating and creating, and they are what English should be about.

Using Painting, Photography and Film to Teach Narration

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I

Most students like, even prefer, the narrative mode. Narration usually is more easily formed to student experience; it seems more natural, easier to control, and less explicitly rhetorical. But there is, of course, a sophisticated core of narrative-rhetorical principles that every narrative writer must control and use, whether he writes fiction, a brief sketch, or a narrative-example to support an opinion he has presented in an expository format. These narrative principles are often taken for granted because, as readers, we have internalized them. A story *usually* begins at the beginning, climaxes in the middle, and winds down to a graduated end. We notice *departures* from that norm, but we take the norm itself for granted.

Young writers, however, can improve their own writing by becoming conscious of narrative-rhetoric, of strategies and techniques that a writer may employ in order to organize and arrange objects, events, and people in space and time on paper. In fact, many of the rhetorical principles of narration, if thoroughly taught, can be transferred by students to exposition and agument.[1] The theory and practice which is explained here is meant to help students refine and become more conscious of relatively basic narrative principles. Also, this approach to narration should construct a foundation for the transfer of narrative skills to other written forms.

I will suggest two methods of teaching narration. Both methods will be supplemented by photography and film, two media that provide useful visual paradigms to written experience. Many of our students are *visually* sophisticated; they are able to follow relatively complex flashback and montage techniques in film and television as well as understand relatively sophisticated visual perspectives in photographs. But they seldom demonstate similar skills when they analyze written words, when they read a stream-of-consciousness novel, or even when they are asked to read an essay or poem that includes several difficult spatical, temporal, or perceptual metaphors. They are, in other words, accustomed to experience rendered visually, but not accustomed to experience rendered in writing. Here are the two approaches combined with pedagogical suggestions on how to use the photographs, films, and writing assignments in a natural sequence.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Reprinted with permission from* College English, *November, 1973.*

I

I begin with a deductive approach. I ask the students to look at a painting or photograph, preferably one that shows a continuing action. We begin the composing process by producing, as a class in discussion, a group of sentences that summarize the action in general terms. We then select the best sentence, put it on the board or on an overhead projector, and use it to generate a whole narrative sequence that works from general observation back through specific details. Before we begin actually writing the narrative, however, we decide as a class on three general qualities: what visual perspective we will take in the narrative; what senses we will plan to awaken in the reader; and what major and minor details from the painting or photograph we will use and in what rough order.[2] These class exercises usually take a whole class hour. The writing begins in the following class.

Suppose the class has decided to describe a photo of an old woman crossing a busy street. They choose a vantage point, say from a second-story window in a building along the side of the street. They have also chosen to emphasize the visual, with perhaps a few audial details interspersed—say traffic noise, shouts from the sidewalk, or the cries of a boy selling newspapers. We begin, then, to write cumulative sentences describing the action, working from general to specific, on the board.[3]

Then, I have the class add qualified detail, always with their eyes *on* the visual material and with the point of view, perspective, and sensory appeal clearly in mind. Our aim is to create, as closely as possible, the illusion that the action is actually occurring *before the eyes* of the reader.

We add details to the base clause with three principles in mind: that every detail should be clearly *related* to another, that the sentence modifiers ought to be *varied*, that we should never add more detail than a reader can comprehend in a single sentence. Here is an example of a sentence that was produced using these exercises.

> She limped over the curb and pushed her legs forward from the hips down, her bulky brown pocketbook dangling from her wrist carrying her shoulders high despite the curve that began at her waist and worked up to the top of her head.

Then I have the class respond to these questions: "Are the words concrete enough so that the reader can *feel* the action? As each detail is added, can the reader relate the specific detail to the general picture of the action?" A few students, for example, felt that the last modifier in the sentence—the curve that begins at the woman's waist and follows her spine until it reaches her head—did not clearly relate to the subject of the main clause. The reader, they said, would not get a clear picture, a coherent visual perspective of the ongoing action.

We revised and produced two sentences.

> She limped over the curb and pushed her legs forward from the hips down, her bulky brown pocketbook dangling from her wrist, carrying her shoulders high. Her body began to form a curve or question mark from her waist to the top of her head.

This first approach, then, emphasizes the making of narrative sentences. From this approach, the writer learns how to bring the details of an experience into smaller, composite narrative units. The core unit of this approach is the cumulative sentence, with details included, arranged to fit a perspective and modified to appeal to the reader's eye.

II

The second approach works inductively—from specifics through to a formal design. I begin by having the class compose a plot summary of the action we will narrate, usually in about a paragraph. The summary usually includes a designation of perspective and point of view, some indication of what particular actions, gestures, or pieces of dialogue will be emphasized, and an indication of where the writer will begin describing the action and where he will stop. But most importantly, the summary ought to include some description of the impression the writer wants to make on his readers and why. After we've produced one sample summary in class, I have each student compose his own summary to serve as a working plan for his own narrative.

This approach reverses the process that we described in the first. Here the writer conceptualizes an entire narrative *before* he begins. When using the first approach, he works on cumulative sentences, composing an action-description piece-by-piece. The first approach helps a writer find material and a means of expressing it; the second helps him discover overall conceptual forms as he composes. Here is a sequence of classroom exercises, built upon qualitative comparisons among photography, film, and written narrative that should help to combine both the deductive and inductive approaches to teaching narration.

I begin by spending some class time analyzing an action photograph, suggesting what actually happened before and after the shot was taken, trying to piece together the overall sequence of action, working from the single moment captured in the photograph.[4] I have had excellent success with an Associated Press news photo in which two New York police detectives carry a wounded fellow-detective from a Muslim mosque in Harlem to a waiting automobile. They are protected by another detective who warily holds a gun as the wounded man is carried toward the automobile. On both sides of the detectives are taunting, screaming people, probably also recently emerged from the mosque. I show the photograph *without* background information and we begin to build a more complete account of what happened, as if we were news reporters covering the action. Such an exercise provides a usually welcome complement to straight analysis of written material. It also helps students to associate visual experience more coherently *before* they write and ultimately leads naturally to considerations of sequencing in written narration.

We work in class with photographs and narrative-action sentences similar to the sentences I described earlier. After discussing the general qualities of a photograph we move to these specific exercises.

1. Have each student compose, during the first ten minutes of a class

period, an objective description of the photograph. If the class hasn't already spent some time with description, have them prepare by making lists of specifics from the photograph with perhaps one summary sentence that describes what happens.

2. Have several students read their descriptions. Then discuss how these detailed descriptions might be transformed into narration. Begin by suggesting how this single shot might fit into an entire action sequence and work toward defining specific writing techniques that will help add a sense of motion through space to the written description.

3. Work specifically on sharpening some of the narrative devices I've already mentioned—have the students develop and practice in class different kinds of sentence modifiers. Participial and absolute phrases are especially useful devices for adding both physical detail and motion to a base action, especially when they are clearly related to a subject or predicate in the main clause. I usually work from single-word modifiers, especially concrete adjectives and adverbs, through large-constituent modifiers—prepositional, participial, and absolute phrases as well as clauses. Specific grammatical advice and practice usually works better in this context than in most others because the students immediately apply the advice to their own narratives. In other words, grammar becomes a matter of style, not mechanics.

After the focused exercises with photography, a film becomes a natural medium for the expression of action and detail in motion and sequence. I use only short films. They are better than full-length films, when you want a class to analyze techniques, for two reasons. First, perspective and detail are more easily recalled; the "content" of the film is more obviously affected in a brief film by style and structure. Second, films of less than twenty minutes can be screened twice and discussed in a single class. Have the class watch and enjoy during the first showing; you might want them to take notes or even suggest interpretations as the film is shown a second time.

Films, even very short films, compose and integrate a great deal of experience very rapidly with the illusion of real-life motion and time. As a result, most films provide a much better metaphor for teaching *pattern* —the way specific experiences are interrelated and connected to form a plot, a unified sequence of action. Photography singles out a single sequence for scrutiny just as a writer may decide to scrutinize a single piece of action, a bit of detail that he wants to be sure to get right, as he composes a narrative. Film, in contrast, lets the viewer see and hear experience in connection and interrelationships. I often use the short film *Bang Head Go Bang Bang* to demonstrate narrative sequence and the development of a conceptual framework for a complex series of actions.[3]

This film works by visual association rather than a more traditional or literary plot-line. Chronology is purposely distorted and we see the experiences as if they were coming to us through the mind of a man who awakens with a severe hangover. The protagonist awakens in a small

apartment bedroom. Both he and his surroundings are in obvious disarray. As he goes to the medicine chest to take something to relieve his headache, we see flashbacks to the previous night and we, along with the protagonist, try to piece together the causes of the hangover. We see a television boxing match, a confusing barroom scuffle as if we were one of the participants, an unidentified woman at the bar, the man-with-hangover as he drinks beer at the bar, as he walks a city street and enters the bar and, finally, a television screen blacking out as the protagonist is knocked cold.

I have my students try to unravel the sequence of events and put them into some natural order, either by chronology or by pointing out causative relationships among various events. Then we consider how and why the filmmaker put the experiences into the form he did. What, above all, did he gain by mixing up the actual order? Was the filmmaker able to emphasize certain actions, gestures, or details by removing them from chronological order and showing them as they were remembered by the protagonist?

Here are a series of assignments and exercises I use to teach narrative skills with *Bang Head Go Bang Bang*.

1. Have two groups of students unravel the flashbacks in the film and present to the class a chronological survey of the action.

2. What kind of person is the main character in the film? How would he talk if you met him on the street? What values does he hold? And what particular evidence can you draw from the scenes and actions in the film to support your answers?

3. Have the students select one repeated image in the film and show how the filmmaker uses it to unify the events of the film.

4. What does this film say? Does it have any message beyond the linking together of certain actions in narrative form? If it does, how is that message related to specific details in the film, to events, actions, or gestures, especially those that are repeated or emphasized.

5. Have the class compose as a group several cumulative sentences that describe a single sequence of action in the film. Work with variation in modification and the relationship among sentence components and details from the film.

Used together these exercises and media materials provide both an interesting and ordered frame for narative experience.

FOOTNOTES

1. I use the term "rhetoric" in its most general sense here: as representative of a body of principles that may be used to discover and create form in experience. I am not speaking of rhetoric as explicit persuasion. I refer to Kenneth Burke and Wayne Booth as rhetoricians who apply the term in similar ways. I do not intend to deal with the very important but exceedingly complex problems of how narrative skills can be transferred to expository and argumentative contexts at length here. Let me merely mention that the chronological or subjective arrangement of experience in narration is not distinctly different from the many forms of experience that we find in the contemporary, personal, or informal essay. Orwell's "The Road to Wigan Pier," and "Politics

and the English Language," and William Styron's "Seige of Chicago" are excellent examples of such essay forms.

2. There are numerous exercises one can use to get the details of a painting or photograph in some kind of rough order previous to writing. Have students look at the item for a few minutes and try to recall as much detail as they can. Select paintings that include details arranged in simple designs to implement observation and retention (John Peto's "The Poor Man's Store" has worked well this way for me). Then have students suggest in class why they recalled certain details and forgot others and how what they remembered might lead to a general interpretation or impression of the painting or photograph. Such preliminary exercises give a sense of purpose and direction to the actual writing of a narrative.

3. I am assuming at least some familiarity with Francis Christensen's theories, as described in *Notes Toward A New Rhetoric*. My borrowings from Christensen are slight and very general, however, and are based primarily on the concept of the cumulative sentence as the base element in narrative writing. I also emphasize, in slightly altered form, Christensen's concept of modification by addition.

4. Select photographs that suggest action and continuity rather than photographic stills, portraits, or static patterns of imagery. *The Searching EYE*, a brief film distributed by Grove Press (16mm, 11 minutes, color), makes an excellent transition from photograph to film. It includes still shots of several contemporary landscape drawings in juxtaposition with actual films of the landscape photographed. To purchase or rent *The Searching EYE* send to The Short Film Division, Grove Press, Inc., 80 University Place, New York, N.Y. 10003. Rental fee: $12.50. Purchase price: $125.00. In any case, select photographs that capture continuing action—a tennis player in the midst of returning a volley, an individual at a restaurant about to put food in his mouth, a child running.

5. *Bang Head Go Bang Bang*, directed by Michael Siporin, 9 minutes, is also available for rental ($9.00) or purchase ($75.00) from Grove Press Short Film Division.

FOCUS: TEACHING BY GENRE

Teaching by genre is only one of the time-honored approaches to the teaching of literature. Because so many good manuscripts have been submitted with this central emphasis, it seems appropriate to make this the focal topic for the spring issue. Although there is some value in teaching the genres of literature, we recognize that there are a multiplicity of other methods which make literature both valuable and pleasurable. In the winter issue of the Bulletin, consequently, the emphasis will be shifted to "Teaching by Theme." Articles not related to the focus, however, will be included in the issue. The deadline for submitting manuscripts for the winter issue is October 15, 1974.

This Is the Way the Story Goes . . .

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I suspect many English teachers believe that if their students could write fiction they would better understand and appreciate it. Many may also believe that imaginative writing could develop new strengths in their powers of composition, agreeing with James Miller, Jr. that "the imagination feeds the roots of any writing that remains readable, and flashes forth from the finished page for any reader to note" (*Word. Self. Reality:* New York, 1972, p. 4). However, I also suspect many teachers balk at simply assigning their students a short story to write or that their students balk when they are assigned one. I would like to suggest a simple exercise which can dissolve this initial resistance to creative writing, which realistically draws on the student's imagination and natural capacity as a storyteller and which involves a process of composition common to many of our greatest authors.

To some degree everyone is a natural storyteller, but the young seem especially prone to this activity. What often sets their storytelling apart from that of today's professionals is that most of the stories they tell are not their own; they are retelling stories they have heard or read. If there is some truth in this observation, and I maintain there is, why should not the English instructor exploit it? This could be accomplished in several ways, but one of the most fruitful is the following: after a student has closely read an assigned short story, ask him to close his book and retell it. It should be made clear to him that he is not being asked to simply summarize the plot but, rather, that he is expected to wholly recreate the story as if he were telling it to someone for the first time or retelling it to someone unfamiliar with it.

The typical student, even if he has read the story with some care, will only remember the general progression of the plot. He will not remember the exact words used to describe the setting or the characters, just as he will not remember the precise words of dialogue the characters engage in. In short, he will recall only the general structure of the story; the details, the flesh and blood, will have to be provided by the student himself. For this technique to work effectively, the student should be given ample time, preferably as much as he desires; otherwise, your injunctions to the contrary aside, he will only summarize.

What are the advantages of this technique? Since the student is given a structure and general feeling for the story, he is not being asked to create *ex nihilo*. Consequently, the initial block many students, and teachers, have about creative writing is to some extent overcome. However, since the student will not recall the details of the story, he is still

forced to be creative, to involve himself in other aspects of creative writing such as description, dialogue, imagery and metaphor, atmosphere, tone and perhaps even pace and rhythm. This involvement may, in turn, make the student a more sensitive reader of fiction and writer of prose generally. To further promote this, the student should be asked, after he has retold the story, to compare his version with the original and with his classmates' versions and to explain what virtues, if any, the original has that the others lack. Clearly, another result of this technique is a greater understanding of the particular story being retold.

The process of creating literature by retelling a story is certainly not new. It might be pointed out to the students that many of the plots comprising Homer's epics, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Shakespeare's plays were not original with them. The originality lay in the retelling, in the way the stories were retold. In speaking of the *Decameron* Maurice Valency says, "It was out of this hoard of medieval narrative that Boccaccio drew the materials for his Hundred Tales. As far as we know, he invented little, or nothing; he selected, adapted, arranged, and retold." "In the sixteenth century almost everyone, it seems, wrote *novelle;* they are as common almost as sonnets. Yet in this age of great creative spirits, it is astounding how little invention is displayed: seemingly, nothing is more difficult than the formulation of a new story, and certainly nothing is rarer. Thus the old stories are told over and over throughout the century, and manner becomes the chief preoccupation of the writer" (*The Palace of Pleasure:* New York, 1960, pp. 5, 13).

It is also interesting that many authors became fascinated with fiction because they were exposed to, and influenced by, the oral storytelling they knew in their youths, and this typically involves stories that are retold from one generation to the next. One thinks of Twain and Anderson, for example.

Undoubtedly, retelling story after story could become monotonous and I would not recommend it for an entire term. But, employed from time to time, it can be both engrossing and rewarding.

Teaching Black Literature in the Secondary School: A Brief Examination of Several Authors

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As an initial consideration, Booker T. Washington has much to offer to the oral tradition in literature. Especially noteworthy are his orations. Even though Washington was not considered a literary giant by many critics, he authored several books of which *Up From Slavery* is the most notable. It is from this primary source that students will be able to learn of Washington's philosophy and the reasons surrounding it.

W. E. B. DuBois deserves consideration as he was an intellectual giant who was motivated by radical interests and scholarly pursuits. Nevertheless, DuBois was a writer of poetry, fiction, and drama that concerned historical and sociological themes. *The Souls of Black Folk*, with the underlying theme of the colorline, is especially exemplary of a poetic style with DuBois' usage of figurative language and his poetic, musical sketches at the beginning of the chapters.

Another author to consider is James Weldon Johnson, a man of literary versatility who made contributions to Black literature in the areas of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. The folk sermons in *GOD'S TROMBONES*, the problem of the colorline in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* speak for themselves.

Certainly, Claude McKay is deserving of a place in any curriculum as his poetry is a first of the radical kind in Black literature. The poetry also merits studying because of McKay's ease in usage of the literary form of the English Sonnet.

One cannot leave the twenties without discussing Langston Hughes who spanned the years from 1920 until he died in 1967. This man whose first poem was published at age seventeen was prolific in poetry, drama, fiction, folklore, humor, and wit. He also coordinated anthologies, traveled widely, was a lecturer, and was well-informed on the Black Scene.

Countee Cullen, a very learned, genteel man, has earned a position in the repertoire of Black literature. Sometimes referred to as the "Black Keats", Countee gave literature an ample supply of poetry of all types, including the Spenserian stanzas. Even though his poetic themes are for the most part, nonracial, Cullen, nevertheless, did not avoid his racial heritage.

The author, Richard Wright, needs little discussion. However, no other person deserves more a position in the annals of Black literature than Richard Wright whose novels, short stories, and nonfiction works perhaps represent naturalism at its best as presented by a Black writer who experienced the ordeals of Jim Crowism.

Zora Neale Hurston is no less deserving of consideration in Black

literature. Especially noted for her folklore, she has also made contributions in the area of fiction and nonfiction. Miss Hurston is very important in the role of the Black woman as a developer of fiction.

History teachers should especially welcome Margaret Walker in view of her tremendous literary effort, *Jubilee*. This book has much Black history in which the author has skillfully converted the raw facts of a painful past into a beautiful work of art. Miss Walker has also attained great poetic heights with her volume of poems entitled *For My People*.

Ann Petry could well represent the "female Richard Wright" with her very excellent naturalistic novel, *The Street*. Both Wright and she expressed well Black life in the inner city. Miss Petry has also written two other novels—one which concerns the New England life of whites and one which explores interracial love. Her versatility is again obvious in a children's book she has written as well as two biographies for young readers.

Misses Walker and Petry, needless to say, are very influential in the development of American fiction.

Another author in the person of Ralph Ellison greatly deserves much consideration in Black literature. Mr. Ellison's *Invisible Man* is an excellent example of fiction that concerns the Black Experience in America.

Gwendolyn Brooks, recipient of the Pulitzer Prize in poetry, has made a stupendous impact on literature with her poetic concerns of urbanized America. Miss Brooks quietly, but effectively, portrays the life of the Black people of the urban North.

Black literature would certainly contain a void if Martin L. King was not included. No other man has done more to stir the American conscious than this man. Although his written works are mainly essays and sermons, Dr. King will best be remembered and studied for his contribution to the oral tradition in American literature.

Ernest J. Gaines has achieved great literary heights with his historical novel, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, and again the history teachers could well make use of this excellently written work. Not only has Mr. Gaines written novels, he has also written a collection of short stories.

The area of folklore should welcome to its environs the likes of Julius Lester who has done an excellent job in the usage of the yesterday tradition in the today sense. His work, *Black Folktales* is one of the most recent versions of folktales. Again, Mr. Lester has also contributed a great deal to Black literature with his commentaries in the form of several books on current affairs as well as his slave narratives that were written after much research. Furthermore, he was written a selection of fiction entitled *Two Love Stories*, which would be very meaningful to high school students.

Finally, the "New Black Poets" including such persons as Don L. Lee, Nikki Giovanni, Sonja Sanchez, Mari Evans, Naomi Madgett and others have contributed much to Black literature with their youth and defiance

of traditional content and form. The works of these poets contain a revolutionary message, a message about the beauty of blackness and a message of nationhood.

Black literature contains different themes as does the literature of any other culture; therefore, educators should stress universality as an integral part of the educational curriculum. Teachers should want their students to be exposed to the various themes that reflect the life and culture of one of many groups of people in our society. It is true that universally, the contributions of Blacks have been omitted from most anthologies, but now is the time for these past inequities to be brought to the forefront and corrected as much as possible by instituting both separate and integrated courses in Black literature. The reason for separate is that it is virtually impossible to do justice to the literary expressions of Black people by simply integrating literature courses, but an in-depth study would merit specialized course offerings. Furthermore, both types of courses aforementioned, should be for all students. The offering of Black literary expressions is so abundant that one should have little difficulty in setting up a curriculum of study in general literature if he desires to do so by genre, theme, or any other literary device that would reflect the literature of all people.

National Profile of High School Seniors Prepared

The National Composite College Board ATP Summary Report presents a national profile of the more than one million high school seniors who participated in CEEB's testing program while in high school. For the survey, students reported their most recent grade in six academic subjects. The average grade, weighted by the number of expected years of study in high school, was a solid B, 3.04 on the common four-point scale. In each subject, the average grade for males was lower than the average grade for females. Of the 85 percent of the respondents who included an estimate of their class rank, nearly 50 percent reported being in the top fifth of their class—half in the top tenth, and half in the second tenth.

Over 80 percent of the students planned to seek some form of financial assistance to further their education, and over half wanted special assistance in finding a part-time job. Approximately 70 percent reported a strong need for college counseling about educational and vocational plans and opportunities, and nearly half desired "special assistance" or help in developing good study techniques. Nearly as many wished help in improving mathematical, reading, and writing skills, while fewer students reported a need for counseling about "personal problems."

The National Composite College Board ATP Summary Report on 1972-73 College Bound High School Seniors is available on request and without charge from regional offices of the College Entrance Examination Board. (Gene I. Maeroff, *New York Times*, December 16, 1973; *Report on Education Research*, January 2, 1974; *College Board News*, January 1974; Bart Barnes, *News-Gazette*, Champaign-Urbana, January 17, 1974.)

An Approach to Student-Centered Discussion

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As most experienced teachers have already learned, and as most new teachers will soon learn, one of the major problems in English teaching centers around classroom discussion. The problem is two-fold: first, how to get the discussion going; second, how to keep it going. When discussion becomes exciting, teaching becomes exciting; when discussion flounders, a teacher feels as if he were in one of those claustrophobic nightmares, running away from some shapeless monster, running hard—but not moving. The nightmare ends, but only partly ends, when the bell rings, since it is difficult to shake off the nagging guilt of having wasted another day, or possibly of having wasted another year.

To specifics: what I am proposing is that for high school (and indeed college) students one might be wise to use a written format to precipitate discussion. Whether it be poem, song, editorial, short story or whatever that is to be discussed, it is simply not enough to duplicate a bunch of "why" and "how" questions. This might work beautifully in graduate school (though I doubt it), and it always works fantastically in the teacher's lounge, but in most classrooms these questions impel the passive students to catch up on their rest, and impel the active students to compare notes on last weekend's dates.

One must give students some clues, some tangible possibilities, to engage their interest. The 'study guide,' developed by Harold Herber as a comprehension aid, provides one possible answer.[1] The following guide was written by one of my tenth grade students. I would suggest, of course, that the teacher prepare the first few guides, but, as a believer in James Moffett's student-centered approach,[2] I would also suggest that the students prepare most of the subsequent guides. Not only do students learn most readily from each other, but as a former baseball coach once told me, "You never really learn a sport (or subject) until you try to coach (or teach) it." The first step in the procedure is to have the students check their answers by themselves. This is the existential or individual stage; second, the students form (or are assigned) to a small group discussion of their answers.

One person in the group acts as moderator by asking (if the quiz is of the multiple-choice type) how many chose letter "a"? how many letter "b"?, etc. The moderator, of course, will ask John why he chose letter "b." John, having a personal stake in his choice will defend and/or discuss his choice, while receiving feedback from other members of the group. The premium is not on right and wrong answers, but rather on reasoning (obviously no grades are given.) Meanwhile, the teacher is circulating among the various groups—probing, clarifying, and encourag-

ing. If a strong conflict arises over an interpretation, the teacher can call time-out for a class discussion of the issue. If there seems to be unusually high interest or widely divergent opinions, the teacher can go through the guide with the entire class, asking the same kinds of questions (e.g., How many picked letter "c"? Why? Can you give me some more specific evidence? How would these lines affect your interpretation? If you were in the character's shoes what might you have done? etc.) Also, and most importantly, if the teacher is perceptive he will have been listening out for the less involved or less confident students who might have made a good point in small group discussion. When he comes to that particular question in the total class discussion the teacher will ask this particular student why he picked letter "c." This might be just the catalyst to lift a student's self-esteem, as well as his esteem in the eyes of his classmate.

A warning and a suggestion: first the warning: study guides, like all pedagogical tools, can become dull with overuse and lack of imaginative variation. If one hears loud groans accompanied not by "Oh no, another textbook," but rather by "Oh no, another study guide" then it's better to switch than fight. Now, a concrete suggestion: I have found it most useful to begin the year with study guides of classical rock songs, such as Cat Stevens, Harry Chapin, and Elton John.

Some further possibilities for the study guide:

1. Let students form committees to summarize various issues, followed by statements which could be rated on a one to five scale by the rest of the class (1 being I strongly agree with the statement; 5 being I strongly disagree).

2. This approach is readily adaptable to movies and plays. (It also provides you with a valid rationalization for taking students to plays and movies you want to see!)

3. Suggest that students might want to illustrate their guides—illustrate literally, symbolically, or whatever.

4. For another comprehension game, suggest that a student construct a poem guide (or any kind of guide) in which every fifth or seventh word is left blank. This is conducive both to divergent thinking (educated guessing using context clues) and to convergent thinking (narrowing down the divergent possibilities as further blanks are revealed). A variation of this game is to ask students to read only the first few lines and/or the last few, then ask for divergent guesses as to what the writing might be about. A further elaboration would be to have several groups act out what they think the poem will be about after having read only the first few and/or the last few lines. Other groups could question their dramatic interpretations and try out their own dramatic versions. After the poem had been fully discussed, there could be written or dramatic assignments using a personal theme of the kind—"If you were Richard Cory, or if you were one of the people on the street, what would you have done?

5. For a comparative approach, one might ask students to construct

guides of two poems or songs which contain similar themes on the human condition.

6. A variation that I am partial to emanates from Moffett's emphasis on teaching by writing from different points of view and in different forms of discourse. One could ask students to construct study guides on two monologues, or a dramatic monologue and a monologue, etc. The study guide would culminate in the student's own attempt to create the particular kind of discourse being discussed in the guide. By the end of the year each student would have a substantial file of written study guides in all forms of discourse, along with his own creative writing in all forms of discourse. One of the reasons I adopted this approach was that I was having some difficulty initiating a "universe of discourse "writing approach with students who had not encountered it in the past.

7. There is usually a letter marked "other" on each study guide question. Use your imagination and complete this short list of suggestions with "others."

FOOTNOTES

1. *Teaching Reading in Content Areas* (Englewood Cliffs, 1970).

2. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, and *A Student-Centered Language Arts Program* (Boston, 1968).

The Pun as an Effective Classroom Technique

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Paronophilia! What would you do if someone called you this? Would you throw one of your bookends at him? Knock him out with your hardcover *Thesaurus*? Run? Or maintain enough common sense to refer to your dictionary and find that you were really being hailed as having an inordinate love of puns.

If you are one who uses puns, then "paronophilia" is probably one of the nicer cuts which you have received. As we all know a pun is a witty play upon two or more meanings for the same word, or on two words with identical sounds. More than likely taken from the Italian *puntiglio*, which means "fine point" or "verbal quibble," a pun has come to be recognized and identified as the lowest form of wit, even though Shakespeare, Homer, Joyce, and many other writers have used it extensively. In fact, with the advent of television and the wider use of media in general, the pun appears to be emerging as an effective technique to attract attention and to elicit humor. So why not use it in the English classroom?

Of course I make no claims that the use of the pun is an English teacher's panacea or that it will end all the compositional and rhetorical ills in *English 101* or in any English course. However, I do feel that a limited and controlled use of this technique would help achieve some of the English teacher's classroom goals, especially in a writing course. Remember, I have used the term "controlled" in regard to the use of punning. If the pun is used excessively, then you will deserve some of the names you are called. But, of course, paramount among all of this is the fact, that, if used excessively, punning would lose its effectiveness and do more harm than good. Another point that should be made is that the personality of the teacher will effect the ultimate results of the use of puns. If used snobbishly or very intellectually, without personal application in an educated way or with stiffness or with lack of sensitivity, the results will bear little fruit.

Number one among the values of the pun is that it may serve as a good motivation technique, because students will react to it in any number of ways. They could either laugh, groan, or buy you a one-way ticket to Amchitka. Nevertheless, a pun can be worth a thousand words, especially when you are teaching grammar. When you come to the point when "concrete" and "abstract" need to be defined, you can always relate the story of the professor who went home to pour the concrete for his new driveway. After finishing and then resting for awhile, his wife awakened him and informed him that a group of children were jumping into and out of his newly formed driveway. Immediately, he arose and

went to the window yelling all of the words he learned in the Navy. His wife, was shocked and asked her husband, "I thought, being a teacher, you are supposed to like children?" Her husband, in between temper tantrums, yelled, "I do! I do! But I like kids in the abstract, not in the concrete!"

Jokes which oftentimes use puns as a basis for their humor rid the English classroom of the stuffiness and the seriousness which have become identified with English teachers. On the other hand, puns in the form of jokes, sometimes change the direction and mood in which a class is going, cut down the formalism that often exists between student and teacher, and open up the possibility of greater communication within the classroom. Something like "Once during a debate, Douglas accused Lincoln of being two-faced, but the rail-splitter, without hesitation, calmly responded; 'I leave it to my audience—if I had two faces, would I be wearing this one?' " has the effect of changing the serious but boring subject matter into something light and more effective.

Jokes and puns increase the student's ability to listen more carefully to the spoken word, and this important factor cannot be minimized if we desire to enhance all the communication skills of our students. They allow our pupils to open up their minds to new and different word patterns and meanings. Salem cigarettes could be changed to "Sail 'm, don't smoke them." Political insight could be covered. For example, when McGovern was speaking in Alaska and was being heckled by Muskie supporters, some of McGovern's aides kept repeating, "Hush, you Muskies!" In fact some uses of puns have become so famous that when a Coast Guard captain captured two Russian travelers, he was able to respond to a reporter by saying, "What you seize is what you get." Puns such as these increase the readability of essays and indicate an ability on the part of the student to see patterns in the world and to combine ideas within a single expression, by reason of which it becomes an excellent device in training himself to condense his thought.[1]

In a composition course in which uniqueness of expression, originality and imaginativeness are essential, the use of puns enables the student to perceive the world around him with unstale eyes. The informal and interesting quality of essays becomes a little bit easier to achieve when students write lightly and lively in an attempt to capture a greater awareness of the human spirit in their essays. This almost Chaucerian look at and love of human nature makes the person and his writing that much richer, and, thus, a student's writing doesn't become an unimaginative mass of meaningless words, but instead grows to form an essay with a keen awareness and insight into the very soul of people and of writing. The little elements of life become important. Words, for example, uninteresting before, now take on greater meaning. A sign seen in a hamburger shop, "Seven days without our food makes one weak," is noticed. Speech patterns are recognized and corrected, especially incorrect pronunciations which have gone unnoticed for years. In our area, spe-

cifically Baltimore City, "paramour" becomes "power mower" and "parrot" is recognized as standing for "pirate." With these not always new observations, a student can better picture the logic of an example of unclear writing when a welfare recipient writes, "I am very annoyed to find out you have branded my son illiterate. This is a dirty lye, as I was married a week before he was born."

As a result of a greater demonstration of the use of language, a student learns the flexibility of a tool which he has often overlooked and seen as useless. He now is encouraged to study language and the words that compose it. At least the student in part desires to think about writing and to improve his technique. Thinking such as this encourages a use of "Zip" in assignments which could ordinarily be lackluster exercises of expression. An ordinary brown paper bag can be described as a "boring brown bag" or can be changed to a "sassy snack sack." Such an approach encourages and not discourages students to continue to draw from their own environment and surroundings. Communication becomes more relevant in speech and in writing and the primary purpose of a writing assignment is accomplished—to be able to communicate and express oneself in an interesting and understanding way. If we can do that in *English 101*, then we have actually accomplished a lot.

All around us people are using puns. Pick up a newspaper or a magazine, listen to the radio or watch television and the impact of the pun cannot be minimized. Advertising is one of the fields which uses them extensively. If millions of dollars are used to tell the public about Bob Griese using Vaseline Hair Tonic ôr about a "Kool Machine" or "Thirst-Aid Truck," then why cannot an aspiring writer use them some of the time.

Some of the effects of such a technique have been interesting. For example, an extremely well-written essay on panty hose led someone to make the comment that "I didn't know that much went into the subject." A new slant on words has also been received by looked at "erected," "disaffirm," "Big Two-Hearted River," "Cinderella," and "Venetian." The last of these occurred in a test on *Oedipus Rex* and *Othello*. Somehow the student got her signals crossed and identified Teiresius as a Venetian prophet. From this incorrect answer another use for the pun can be drawn. A tactful correction was, "Have you ever seen a Venetian Grecian?" Of course this comment immediately brought to mind an idea that maybe the answer wasn't that wrong after all, because the seer could then be called a "Venetian blind."

Of course the last pun is the kind which everyone groans about and which has resulted in an unfavorable view of its use. But the reason for making such a correction is obvious. For that matter, can anyone not foretell what might be mentioned when a teacher looks at an essay in *English 101* and sees the words "Santa Clause" written?

Naturally there will be excessive uses of the pun just as there are excessive uses of the comma and of vague words in essays. Titles

especially come to mind at present. "A Comb I Couldn't Part With" will never be forgotten; nor will a discussion of Georgio de Chirico's painting "Mystery and Melancholy of a Street" which began with the title "A Lot of Bull," and neither will the title of a description of a dried fruit have a short existence, "A Trip to the Prune." Of course I would even be against such excessive uses of the pun. On the other hand, sensitive uses of it are always looked for. The student who writes an essay on a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and entitled it "A Revolt" had the right idea. So did the describer of a game of Monopoly when he entitled his essay, "The Games People Play." Even the housewife who related her adventures with her children in "The Three Musketeers" knew what she was doing. The list could go on and on: a husband's account of his wife, "Do You Take This Nurse?"; a discussion of cremation, "Ashes to Ashes"; and an essay on the M & M imaginatively named "The Mighty Machine."

With so many examples one might tend to believe that what we need in *Composition and Rhetoric* is more of the pun. To a certain extent I would agree, but the fact of the matter could be that the teacher who uses the pun sensitively and with moderation is the one who is displaying an attitude of mind toward human nature, toward life, and toward writing that is contagious. Whether we hate puns or we love them, whether we admire them or despise them, at least we should still be able to find some use for them.

FOOTNOTES

1. Aileen Lorberg, "The Pun as a Legitimate Comic Device," *English Journal* May, 1949, pp. 271-272.

The Language Arts Skill Center as a Method for Individualizing Basic Skills in the English Curriculum

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Schools of today are re-evaluating the English curriculum, and, in doing so, returning to an emphasis on a continuous program of basic skills in an atmosphere which allows every child the opportunity to succeed.

The Language Arts Skill Center is one answer to the question of the "how" of individualized instruction: it is specific in dealing with the basic skill areas for the individual. The Center is designed to aid students in reading comprehension, reading speed, usage, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, word attack, punctuation, and writing skills. It is not solely remedial; rather, it deals with any child who has a need whether it be for remedial reading or for speed reading and vocabulary for the college bound.

Skill Centers are operating successfully at Lake Braddock Secondary School, a new open-space facility where the faculty was selected specifically to team-teach heterogenous groups of students in large open areas.

Each Skill Center is staffed by an aide, in our case personnel who have had experience as English teachers. These personnel have no classroom assignments, nor any tasks such as hall duty or substitute teaching, nor any students permanently assigned to them. They are trained and their roles determined by the reading teacher and the English Department Chairman in cooperation with the entire English staff. Also, parent volunteers are brought in on a one-to-one basis for children with extreme difficulties. The reading teacher has become a resource teacher, directly responsible for the Centers, spending her time involved with teachers in planning thematic units and providing a range of multi-level materials.

The Center must be readily available to students and teachers. In our situation, there are four sub-schools, each with its own Skill Center and personnel. A sub-school is a large area, without interior walls, except for the offices and media center, serving approximately 500 students during the day for math, science, social studies, and English. In this open area, the Skill Center is in physical sight of any particular class meeting in the room. This, in part, aids the philosophical development of the Center in that students are not being taken away from the mainstream program to be hidden away to make up work in deficient areas.

The Skill Centers are equipped with a variety of materials. We have very few copies of any one item, but a variety of materials.

One type of material in frequent use is the Learning Activity Package (LAP). These LAPS are teacher-made rather than purchased, and are

designed to deal with a specific skill. Each LAP basically consists of pre-test, objectives, directions, examples, exercises, check-points, conferences, and post-tests. Some are designed to be used alone without other materials while others direct the students to related enrichment activities, to audio/visual items, to texts. The Skill Center personnel are readily available if difficulty is encountered. The LAPS are kept in small numbers in the Skill Center for use when a student is diagnosed as being able to benefit from the particular packet, and is willing to work on the skill with the packet methodology. The LAPS are not available in quantities since we do not feel that all students need a packet, rather students—or small groups of students—who demonstrate a need in a specific area.

Individualization is not seen as necessarily one-to-one, although it can be. Students working in the same skill area are encouraged to work together in a small group, each helping the other. Of course, this group is heterogenous and non-graded.

The LAPS available in the Skill Center include ones on sentence fragments, run-ons, capitalization, sentence variety, topic sentence, apostrophes, transitions, and commas. Special interest LAPs began to appear including stage directions and improvisation.

An added responsibility of the Skill Center personnel is the development of LAPs and Learning Centers which can be used by teachers. For example, an English/history (7s) team was preparing to study the Civil War. The Skill Center developed a LAP on complete sentences utilizing Civil War materials as the content. A 9/10 team utilized a LAP on vocabulary building constructed in the Skill Center with mythology as the content. Thus, the Skill Center became a more integral part of the daily functioning of the English program.

Commercially prepared materials are also included. We have available SRA Kits, Reading for Understanding Kits, Tactics Kits, Be A Better Reader Series, Springboards, Vocabulary for College Bound, Breaking the Reading Barrier Series, NASCAR Reading Program, and a collection of sound-filmstrips of high interest, low reading level.

Much use is made of the commercially prepared Random House Skill Center which offers a diagnostic test in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage. From the diagnostic test, students are directed to specific exercises within the program. These exercises include pre-tests, post-tests, examples, and checkpoints. It also has a re-routing procedure if proficiency is not demonstrated.

Referral to the Skills Center comes from a number of avenues, including self-referral, referral by a teacher, or counselor referral. The students can be referred for a specific skill area, such as work with commas, or for a general diagnostic test in reading or grammar. In either case, complete records of the student's progress are kept in the Center and shared frequently with the teacher and the student.

One important concept is that if we, as English teachers, propose that our major objectives are attainable, then the Skill Center becomes very

important. The Skill Center is seen as an integral part of a total program, rather than as supplementary material. Thus, if a student is in the Skill Center, he does not need to make up work which he "missed" in the classroom. Rather, work in the Skill Center is the classroom. Obviously, this necessitates a more individual program within the class as a whole.

Some students have shown that they desire a grade for their participation in the Center, and they receive a grade based on work accomplished. Others work in an ungraded fashion. Either is acceptable. Students work one, two, or three days a week in the Center for an unspecified period of time.

Probably the most attractive phase of the Skill Center is the student approval. Ninety percent of the students are pleased with the Center-no matter what their previous level of accomplishment in school. Many students would like to spend more time in the Center. There is little or no coercion to be a part of the Skill Center program; the number of participants has grown rapidly since the opening of the school without any pushing.

The Skill Center deals with the skill difficulties of individuals no matter what their academic ability. It is a method of achieving individualization and emphasis on language arts skills. It is one method which works. Yet, it must be coupled with a curriculum and program which allows it to work, which accept the importance of the basic skills. Any department employing the Skill Center realizes that there are more important things than having everybody study LORD OF THE FLIES, although students will benefit from that at the same time.

Secondary School Students Show Strong Faith in Themselves

When asked how they feel about their future, 80 percent of 60,000 students in 2,000 schools throughout the country selected the following answer: "It's up to me. It's in my power to make the future what I want it to be if I try hard enough." Only 20 percent checked off, "I really don't have control over my future. If I'm lucky and the breaks come right, things will be fine. Otherwise I'll just have to take what comes." The survey of how young people regard their lives and their future was conducted among junior and senior high school students by Scholastic's National Institute of Student Opinion through ballots in the November 29 issues of *Junior Scholastic* and *Senior Scholastic* magazines. Results were released in mid-January.

When asked the question, "Should everybody have a right to a college education," 96 percent selected "Yes." When asked whether they personally want a college education for themselves, 51 percent said, "Yes, very much," 17 percent said they would like one but could live without it, 6 percent didn't want one at all, and 26 percent had not yet made up their minds. When asked whether they would rather work for a man or a woman, 79 percent said it would depend on the person, not on the person's sex. Fifteen percent of the total would prefer working for a man, and 6 percent for a woman.

Critical Writing and Decision-Making: The Role of Process in Composition

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We have attempted to write objectives that treat writing as an organic process, a complex activity that requires the writer to be a self-aware self-assessor. The objectives encourage the student to look closely at his subject, his purpose for writing, his language, and his audience. DONALD A. SEYBOLD, *Catalog of Representative Performance Objectives in English: Grades 9–12*, Tri-University Project on Behavioral Objectives in English.

More attention will be paid to processes underlying written and oral composition . . . processes of composing will receive careful attention in the teaching of composition . . . EDMUND J. FARRELL, *Deciding the Future: A Forecast of Responsibilities of Secondary Teachers of English*, 1970-2000 A.D., NCTE Research Report No. 12.

In a recent unit on modern film, I took the opportunity to help students examine their decision-making process. What stages of analytical thinking does the student go through as he faces what in this case would be a problem in critical writing? How many stages does he go through? Can he be taught to make use of a rather complex "attack" on a problem in writing? Could any growth in problem-saving transfer to other aspects of his life?

Answers to these questions, it seemed to me, would contribute to helping the students in my eleventh and twelfth grade English classes become increasingly self-aware self-assessors. In addition, perhaps they could benefit in their ability to write critically from systematic work with a model for decision-making.[1]

I divided my four classes into two groups: control group A and experimental group B. Both groups, after having viewed and discussed Francois Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player* and Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*, wrote a five-paragraph review on either film. Most of the reviews suffered from a lack of organization, a persistent problem with these juniors and seniors. The papers often lacked a clear thesis, or, if they had a thesis, lacked a clear development.

To test the role of decision-making in composition, I assigned both groups a review of Ingmar Bergman's film, *The Seventh Seal*. Both groups participated in an hour's discussion of the film. Group A had an additional hour of discussion and then spent an evening and a class period writing their reviews. Group B inductively worked out a problem-solving model.

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* With the help of Dr. William R. Martin, George Mason University.

I asked the students in Group B to write out the steps they went through in making *any* decision, be it buying a record or refusing a date. A number wondered what this had to do with English, but all were considerably intrigued. When they brought in their lists the following day, I asked them to form into small groups and, using their lists of steps in making a specific decision, to generate a general decision-making model. Each group reported on its model and I contributed "my" model (from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory). The students' models were strikingly similar to mine:

NWREL MODEL	*TYPICAL STUDENT'S MODEL*
1. Identification of a concern	1. What is the problem?
2. Diagnosis of the situation	2. What do I know about it?
3. Formulating action alternatives	3. What are some solutions?
4. Feasibility testing of selected alternatives, including training and evaluation	4. Which solution works best? (Try it!)
5. Adoption and diffusion of good alternatives	5. Use it!
	6. Evaluate how well it works.

I then suggested that the students may well use *all* these steps in *any* decision they made, whether it was buying a dress or hitting a baseball. They sat quietly for a moment, and then one boy, a varsity baseball player, blurted, "Yeah! I do that every time I hit the ball!"

The students had made the connection between their everyday activities and the abstract model; now I suggested that they should go through the same process, self-consciously, in writing a composition. Given the assignment, they should ask, "What am I supposed to write on?" (Step 1). They might want to do some research on the subject or ask me for further information (Step 2). They might want to think up several approaches to the assignment (Step 3). They should then try writing several of the best approaches and see which seems to work best (Step 4). They should then write the paper (Step 5), proofread it and revise it (Step 6) and then give it to me for grading (Step 6 again). At every step the students would be evaluating their own work, judging it through several levels of completion, involving themselves in the process. It seemed to be a good way to urge students to revise and rework their own papers, as I had pleaded for unsuccessfully in the past. Group B was also given an evening and a class period to write their reviews.

Comparing the average grades[1] for each class using a grade-point conversion system (A+ = 13, A− = 12, B+ = 11, etc.), Class 1 of Group A scored an average grade of 7.53 (between a C and a C plus) on the first review, and 7.65 on the second, or a gain of .12. Group A, Class 2, scored an average of 7.14 on the first review, and 7.33 on the second, or a loss of .08. Average gain for Group A was .02.

Class 1 of Group B scored an average of 7.14 on the first review, and 7.76 on the second, or a gain of .62. Class 2 of Group B scored an

1. See appendix for implications of various letter grades.

APPENDIX: IMPLICATIONS OF LETTER GRADES

(From General Grading Standards for English 101–102, George Mason University)

GRADE	CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION	DICTION	MECHANICS
A	Unified point-of-view, revealing perception. Central idea defined and developed with concrete details. The theme progresses logically and has graceful transitions.	Fresh, appropriate, accurate, idiomatic	Rate or isolated minor errors. (E.g., misspelling of a difficult word.)
B	Unified point-of-view, with the central idea defined and developed with concrete details. The theme progresses in coherent paragraphs and sentences.	Appropriate, accurate, idiomatic	Infrequent minor erorrs. (E.g., several misspellings.)
C	Central idea clearly defined and developed with concrete details. Occasional wrongly placed emphasis; purpose clear but unimaginatively constructed.	Accurate and idiomatic, but occasionally inappropriate or trite.	Isolated serious error, infrequent minor errors. (E.g., an agreement error and several misspellings.)
D	Central idea clear; details present, but insufficient. Wrongly placed emphasis. Purpose clear but unfulfilled. Inconsistently developed.	Idiomatic, but occasionally inaccurate, inappropriate, or trite.	Occasional serious errors, infrequent minor errors. (E.g., an agreement error, comma splice, more than one misspelling per 100 words.)
F	Central idea unclear or unsupported. Purpose unclear, paragraph incoherent, transitions lacking.	Inappropriate, inaccurate, unidiomatic, or trite.	Frequent serious errors; frequent minor errors.

Of writing in general, one outstanding virtue in an essay overshadows minor faults of judgment and expression. Most students come to the course with a mastery of the mechanics of writing; if a student does not, he should master them on his own or with the instructor's direction during the first weeks of the course.

average of 6.56 on the first review and 7.56 on the second, or a gain of 1.0. Average gain for Group B was .80.

Clearly, the ability of the Group B to organize as measured by conventional grades increased more than did the same ability of Group A. The average grades of both groups increased as they usually do as the students become more familiar with the material and the instructor as the unit progresses. However, the average increase from the first essay to the second is usually around .10 (Group A-1 is typical); Group B's individual class increases and group increases are greater than expected.

Students who had problems with organization in their papers seemed to be helped more by the problem-solving approach. Better students in Group B had a good command of organization and possibly could have benefited from further discussion of the subject matter. All students did much better on the second review, although Bergman's film is complex and difficult. (Note that Group A-2 did worse on their second review.)

I don't believe that decision-making is a cure-all in teaching of composition; a teacher of composition needs a variety of approaches to be effective. I do believe that this highly informal experiment shows that students may be helped in assessing their own work by making them aware of some of the processes that must go on during composition. I have suggested a connection between decision-making, self-evaluation, and organization. Perhaps other teachers can identify other processes in composition to help build a repertoire of processes that can make students self-aware self-assessors in composition, and in life.

Secondary School Students Show Strong Faith in Themselves

When asked whether they regarded use of alcohol or use of drugs as the more serious problem, 39 percent found drugs to be the major problem, 8 percent alcohol, while the remaining 53 percent found both problems to be equally serious. Forty percent felt students should be required by law to take drug-use detection tests at their schools, 30 percent felt they should not be required to, and 21 percent had no opinion.

When asked whether they thought that teachers were as much respected as were persons in most other professions, 34 percent thought that they were, 33 percent thought they were not, 8 percent thought they were more respected than people in other professions, and the rest were not sure. (*News from Scholastic*, January 14, 1974.)

Teaching Writing to High School Students: Instilling Confidence

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Much has been written about methods for the teaching of writing to high school students. Workbooks, sequential texts and essays concerning methods and their application offer ideas that are adaptable to the individual situation. Each method has the common objective to establish a measurable improvement in the quality of the student's writing production over a period of time. The numerous methods and varied applications, which often hinge on several other methods and applications, create questions in my mind as to what aspects of a method are useful to my situation, and when should I use the preferred aspects of a method, if to use them at all, in conjunction with other approaches. Every new year brings with it a new set of students which calls for a modification of last year's method and application to the point where you are again "playing-it-by-ear."

What fascinates me is the confidence an author puts into his suggested method. Many times the author of a method literally cries out with a salesman's pitch, "This will work!", or, "Try it, you'll like it!" What fascinates me even more is the confidence some researchers put in the student's capabilities and potentialities in their proposed methods, with the hopeful results that a student *can* himself write confidently and effectively. Teachers should be aware of this implicit fact in connection with the method, or combination of methods, they propose to use. We must be confident that all students will improve in their skills in written communications. Confidence must be primarily put in the student's individual potential and the possibility of broadening a student's inherent talents, or no method, whatever it may be, will be effective.

Students presume a confidence in their teacher because the teacher is older, or he may have an impressive degree or possibly several impressive degrees, or he may have an excellent reputation as a teacher, or he may have written published articles, or, and this does exist even though it seems supernatural, he is a combination of all the above. This same confidence must be reciprocated. Students are young, and they have unique experiences and fresh, novel ideas. Students will work intensively at an appealing and challenging task. They are creative in their many and varied ways of expression. Why should we perpetuate a problem that has stifled good writing from many students for too long a time? Why should we wait until our students get older, until some are given college degrees, until some turn out to be teachers or professional writers, before we put our confidence in them as creative writers? As teachers, we must *now* have a belief in the capabilities and potentialities of each

student to produce quality writing as a student.

James Moffett in *A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973) suggests a method which is explicitly dependent upon a teacher's confidence in the student. The basis of his method is discussion—talk among a group of five or six students. Moffett believes that verbalization of a student's experiences is the first step to a written product. Discussion helps the student recognize his own experiences and compare them with other students. Discussion also orientates the student toward the audience for which he will be writing. The audience is not a teacher who sits in judgment of a written piece, but a group of peers who share, disagree with, and suggest improvement, regarding a writer's experiences, ideas, and wording structure.

The big problem is making the transition from speaking to writing. Moffett suggests more discussion. The student writes what he has verbalized, whether it is his own ideas or a comment or modification of another student's ideas. At this point, students exchange papers in the group for verbal and written evaluation. The evaluation is not based on a "this-is-wrong-and-this-is-correct approach, or a "pass/fail" approach. It is based on "you-*can*-and-*will*-improve." Grammatical and content evaluation are not totally constricted to standard usage laws which may tend to stifle a student's initiative and creativity. Rather, evaluation is partially based on restructuring the way ideas are expressed without changing the ideas. Students might suggest a "better way of putting it."

The teacher's evaluation of the paper runs parallel to the students' evaluations. The result of several evaluations to one written piece is a more objective evaluation and a possibility of multiple options from which the student may choose. A teacher's confidence in a student's ability to evaluate and suggest alternate ways of expression can only be an asset to another student, as well as to the teacher. It allows for more time to write more pieces, and more evaluation. This approach promotes quantity, that will eventually produce quality.

The Moffett method finally hopes to help the student develop a confidence. The student is asked to be confident of his own ability to write and evaluate and to accept confidently the immediate feedback of others. Feedback, which is evaluation and suggestion, is not punitive, but is rather an opportunity to improve. It does not damage initiative and creativity! Rather, it instills confidence in the writer that he can and will write more effectively.

Kenneth Koch in *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* (New York: Vintage Books, Chelsea House Publishers, 1971) begins with the same premise as James Moffett. Koch suggests that before you engage in a method of teaching the writing of poetry, you must make the students believe you believe they are poets. He then proceeds to put a confidence in their ability to create a free flow of ideas which are not stifled by an adherence to classical styles, laws of poetry (e.g. rhyme, meter) or laws

of grammar. The poems are then read aloud for suggestions and evaluation from the students as well as the teacher.

Both Moffett and Koch rely on the past experiences of the students, the ability of the student to recall those experiences, to verbalize those experiences (group discussion), and finally to write in a coherent, comprehensible fashion which also depends on constant group feedback. Their methods offer nothing without a teacher's initial confidence in the future improvement of a student as a writer. No method for teaching writing to high school students will work if it does not primarily contain a teacher's confidence in the student as a prerequisite. For too long now confidence has been put into what the teacher thinks or knows, or believes to be the only way of writing. Consequently, we find students writing for the teacher and being forced into a style of writing which is not uniquely their own. In such a case, the method will work, as all methods do, but the results will be minimal, as we are all well aware. The positive results will be gauged on the student's ability to imitate the method and what the method suggests. Creativity will obviously be minimal.

Our task as teachers is to adopt a method such as Moffett's or Koch's, or develop a method which includes a prerequisite where the teacher must initially exhibit and persist in demonstrating a confidence in the abilities and future improvement of a student as a writer. For once, we, as teachers, must believe in the person, not the mechanics; that is, in the student, not the method. When we refer to the coined statements, "You can't write," or, "If you keep doing this, you'll never improve," we are putting the method before the student. This only damages the student's ego, his desire to improve, and most of all, it shows him that you don't have confidence in him as a writer.

As Moffett and Koch suggest, the method should be "student-centered." The student should be the nucleus of any method, since it is the student who eventually verbalizes, writes and revises his own ideas. This approach can only promote individual creativity, and no longer make a student a "slave" to a method. Our work, as teachers, becomes one of being an advisor, and not a judge. Our comments will be taken seriously by the student because our verbal and written evaluation will be based on our suggestions to the student for improvement, and not our assessment of a pass/fail paper. As you can see, the teacher's role in a "student-centered" method is not made secondary. It is a more active role which allows for individual attention to students who have a need for more improvement than others.

The age-old problems of teaching writing to students can at least be partially alleviated if the teacher chooses a "student-centered" method. The prerequisite of a teacher's confidence in the student as a writer must be a teacher's guide in the application of a chosen method and a never forgotten premise in the implementation of that method.

GREAT ENGLISH TEACHING IDEAS

Robert C. Small, Jr.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Robert C. Small, Jr. • Joy Colbert • Laurel Rule

Here is the second column. The ideas all deal with the teaching of poetry, that continuing problem we all face.

Again, let me ask you to send in your ideas: those you find and, especially, those you invent. There's nothing as helpful as an idea that you know a real teacher has developed and used successfully.

The next column should follow the topic of next winter's issue—"Teaching Literature by Theme." Please share your great ideas with us.

The Problem with Poetry

Students hate poetry. They read it unwillingly and rarely understand more than the simple, superficial "point" the author makes. Their regular reaction to any attempt to teach them about the deeper aspects of a poem is to ask, "Why didn't he just say what he meant instead of beating around the bush?"

If a survey were taken of English teachers, probably two of every three would subscribe to the essence of the above statement. Yet, in recent years, many teachers have concluded that the fault for this depressing situation lies more with the specific poetry which is taught and the way it is taught than with either poetry in general or students as readers. Poetry selected to be enjoyable and meaningful to children and adolescents, poetry like that in *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle*, does not produce sighs and groans: and the success of the so-called "rock lyrics" is widely known.

Equally important, the treatment given poems in class clearly influences their success or failure. In fact, many students, teachers, and poets object to the very idea of "teaching" poems. As Stephen Dunning points out in *Teaching Literature to Adolescents: Poetry* (Scott, Foresman and Co., 1966), most poems are best treated as individual works rather than grouped, and most people prefer to read one or two poems at a time rather than the large cluster called a "unit" (pp. 25-27).

Finally, a love of poems is closely related to the creation of a poem or what Dunning calls saying something poetically (pp. 30-32). Whether or not the result is especially good or effective—although it probably will be—is less important than that each student feel satisfaction and develop a need to say things well, to put ideas in striking ways. When poetry is

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Joy Colbert and Laurel Rule, who are doctoral students at VPI and SU, assisted Dr. Small with this column.*

taught of as something which only geniuses ever attempt, it becomes like a dried-up object in a museum, peculiar and perhaps interesting for its strangeness but forever dead and certainly not something one would take home and live with.

Below is but a brief sample of the thousands of great ideas that teachers have discovered for doing something with poetry in class, something to make it live, something that takes it off the shelf and gets it into the students' world.

Invite a Poet to Your Classroom

R. L. Norris, *The Turtle and the Teacher*, Richmond Intercultural Center for the Humanities, 1 West Main Street, Richmond, Virginia, $2.00.

As English teachers, we have often read poems to students, frequently discussed them in class, and occasionally listened to recordings of poets reading their own works. Rarely have we made use of the best "audio-visual" device of all, the actual live poet. At the Richmond Intercultural Center for the Humanities, the live poet became a major teaching device. As Mrs. Ruby Lee Norris describes the results in her book *The Teacher and the Turtle*, the results were exciting and, to the teacher who might feel that children and poetry do not mix, an eye-opener. In her introduction, Mrs. Norris remarks,

> *The Teacher and the Turtle* is a partial record of the interaction between poets and children. From the poets' side of this interaction there are descriptions of inventive and meaningful techniques including the poems they used—some of their own and some by other well-known poets. From the children's side of this interaction there are their poems written in response.
>
> (p. iii)

As one reads what these three practicing poets said to the students they taught and then reads the poems that resulted, the value of the living poet becomes clear. Similar material is contained in Kenneth Koch two books, *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* (Chelsea House Pub., 1970) and *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* (Random House, 1973).

If a teacher wishes to find and capture a live poet, there is a guide to poet-hunting called *A Directory of American Poets* (Poets and Writers, Inc.) containing the names and addresses of thousands of American poets classified by states as well as information about the school level on which the poet is willing to work, a guide to the teaching of poetry, and other helpful material.

The Right Poem at the Right Moment

Stephen Dunning, *Teaching Literature to Adolescents: Poetry*, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1966, pp. 26-27.

As most elementary school teachers, but a few secondary English teachers, seem to be aware, having a stock of useful poems for various

occasions is a priceless means of making poetry live. The poetry file divided by themes, topics, etc. allows the teacher to pluck an appropriate poem without warning when an event creates a good setting: snow poems for snowy days, poems on war when war threatens. Such a folder is for the high school teacher a means of taking advantage of situations handed to the teacher by the world around him.

Pictures and the Poet's World

H. D. Leavitt and D. A. Sohn, *Stop, Look, and Write!* Bantam Books, 1969, pp. 169-178.

Thinking metaphorically can be difficult for the student who seems unable to look beyond the literal level in poetry. A stimulating exercise for prodding the student's imagination in relation to metaphors involves the use of pictures. The student is given a number of dramatic photographs of ordinary objects viewed from unusual perspectives and describes not what is literally there but what he seems to see. Accompanying questions can encourage him to think in terms of comparisons and to account for detail accurately. Whether his description takes the form of a poem or not, the student has experienced the interplay of sense, imagination, and metaphoric expression.

Getting in the Right Frame of Mind

Edmund Ferrell, "Listen My Children and You Shall Read," *English Journal*, January, 1966 pp. 39-45, 68.

One problem many students have when approaching a poem is that they are in moods which conflict with that of the poem or their minds are on subjects unrelated to the poem. The teacher should, therefore, design preliminary activities which will get the students thinking about matters which are connected with the poem to be studied. Such activities obviously must grow from the poem itself, its theme, its words, its problems. For example, a teacher might ask students to name famous baseball players, working backwards in time until few can be remembered. The resulting discussion of the fleetingness of fame would form a perfect introduction for "To an Athlete Dying Young." Thus, if the teacher cannot always suit the poem to the setting, he can work to produce the setting for the poem.

Verbal Inkblots

Bernarr Folta and Richard Trent, *Discovering Motives in Writing*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972, pp. 29-30.

Students are often reluctant to trust their responses to abstract words and their connotations. The amusing but instructive Verbal Inkblot Test will not only teach the concepts of abstract/concrete words, connotation, and free association but also allow the student to gain some insight into how he makes meanings and some confidence in his ability to associate ideas. The transition can easily be made from the analysis of the verbal

inkblot connotations to discussions of word connotations in poetry. The steps involved in this activity are

1. List fifty abstract words;
2. After each word, have each student write the first word that comes to his mind;
3. Then have him go back over the list and write down words that come to his mind after deliberation;
4. Finally, discuss the results, examining contradictions between the spontaneous and the deliberate word choices.

The Wish Problem

J. B. Hogins and G. Bryant, eds., *Juxtaposition*, SRA, Inc., 1971, p. 103.

In order to give the students a chance to explore the non-verbal aspects of poetry, an excellent simple device is the "Wish Problem," the purpose of which is to sharpen each student's awareness of non-verbal signs and connotations. In this technique, each student is given one 5" X 7" note card and drawing and writing materials. His problem is to communicate symbolically to another student his wish for something such as a new car or an engagement ring and to do so without representing the thing itself. He is also to attempt to communicate the reason for the wish and the feeling the wish causes in him. When the wishes have been completed, they are exchanged and comparison is made between the representation of the wish and its significance and the flat word or phrase such as "new car" which says the wish. The next step is to look at the way poets have expressed their ideas and the flat words which carry the literal meaning of those same ideas.

Poetry Is Where You Find It

Myra Weiger, "Found Poetry," *Elementary English*, December, 1971, pp. 1002-1004.

Because students so often think that poetry is something found only in weighty texts and enjoyed only by teachers, the technique of "found poetry" might be used to show that poems are everywhere. The technique also challenges the creativity of the students while giving them material with which to work. A found poem is one that "keeps the words just as they originally appeared, merely rearranged into lines to bring out their poetic quality. The source may be almost anything, so long as the original intent was not poetry." The students work to select the passages and to arrange them in a form that emphasis their poetic qualities.

The Title Game

George R. Turner, "Teaching Poetry—the First Fifty Minutes," *Classroom Practices in Teaching English—1967-1968*, pp. 3-5.

Although in many cases the title of a poem is not essential to its under-

standing, a number of poems depend partly on their titles to clarify meaning. Using such poems, presented to the class without titles, as a game can ensure close and thoughtful reading. Thus a poem like "The Eagle" by Tennyson, "Divers" by Schauffer, or "Steam Shovel" by Malam might be put on the board; students given time to supply titles; and then each title examined, attacked or justified, and accepted or rejected. In addition to being a challenge, such a game requires a close look at relatively subtle shadings and word choices.

Laundry List Poems

Irene W. Sherwood, "The Poet and the Laundry List," *English Journal*, September, 1970, pp. 824-825.

Among a number of devices for showing students that they can say things poetically, the "Laundry List Poem" is one of the most effective. It consists of the following:

1. Begin a class by playing "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things" from *The Sound of Music*, asking students to listen carefully to the list of items;
2. Next list and analyze the items from the song. Note that familiar items are listed, detail is accurate and concise, etc.;
3. Then play "These Foolish Things Remind Me of You" and analyze the items listed;
4. Pass out copies of Rupert Brooke's "The Great Lover" and Walt Whitman's "Miracles";
5. Have students work in small groups to analyze the lists;
6. After further discussion of poetic lists, especially in comparison to mere lists, each student should try his hand at writing list poems.

Poetic Parallels

Rosellen Brown, et al eds. *The Whole Word Catalogue, Teacher's and Writer's Collaborative Newsletter*, vol. 4, issue 3, Summer 1972, p. 105.

The study of poetry can effectively be begun by using first the writing of, and then the reading of poems built on parallel ideas. By providing structure based on repetition and comparison, this type of poem offers a pattern that allows the student to express his feelings and ideas. With little explanation from the teacher, these parallel poems can lend themselves to class brain-storming, quick production, instant discussion, and immediate revision. The students are given initial phrases such as "I used to be but now I am " and asked to complete them with ideas, lists, etc. in a more or less parallel fashion. Such poems, largely descriptive in nature, can lead to the reading of poems built on contrasts as well as descriptive verse in general.

Although the creative teacher can, as these ideas show, develop imagi-

native and exciting ways to approach poetry, there are also many excellent commercial materials available to help. By no means the only useful ones, the following have been enthusiastically recommended by a number of teachers who have used them:

1. *Aware* by Random House;
2. *Come to Your Senses* by Scholastic;
3. *Haiku. The Mood of the Earth Series* by Lyceum Productions, Inc.;
4. *Poetry* by Scholastic;
5. *Poetry on Film* by Visual Learning Corp.;
6. *The Poetic Experience* by Guidance Associates;
7. *Describing What We See* by SL Film Products;
8. *Why Man Creates* by Pyramid Films; and
9. *Understanding Poetry* by Educational Reading Service.

Of course, there is a large number of recordings of various types designed to be used with the teaching of poetry as well as collections of posters and books of pictures. An excellent recent article which presents an extensive collection of references and sources related to the teaching of poetry is "Contemporary Poetry: When Is Now?" by William Fisher (*English Journal*, September, 1972, pp. 847-852).

Guidelines for Dialect Workshops Prepared

The NCTE Executive Committee has authorized dissemination of a set of guidelines for inservice programs on dialects, prepared for the Commission on Language and the American Dialect Society by Thomas L. Clark, University of Nevada.

Titled *A Handbook of Short Courses in Dialect Studies for K-12 Teachers*, the booklet is designed to help teachers disseminate information about regional and social dialects on the premise that "since the primary medium for education is the native tongue, everyone should know as much as possible about that medium and about the popular attitudes toward its varieties."

The handbook is divided into four main sections: a discussion of the general pattern of the workshops, a specific description of the workshop models, a directory of persons able to put the workshop leaders in touch with linguists and other resource persons, and a selected bibliography of books, articles, and recordings that would be helpful in workshops.

The formats for the workshops described in the pamphlet were tested by Professor Clark over a two-year period in and around Las Vegas. The models include formats for one-day, two-day, one-week, and two-week workshops.

The booklet is available for $1.00 from the NCTE Order Department, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Ill. 61801.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Foster B. Gresham

This is a significant year for VATE, for 1974 marks the sixtieth anniversary of a year when a small group of dedicated college professors and high school teachers in English met to establish an English professional organization in Virginia. There were not as many present as there will be hostesses at our 1974 fall conference, but they started VATE on its way.

To celebrate this beginning and honor our founders, VATE will hold its sixtieth-anniversary fall conference on October 25 and 26 in the appropriately historical setting of Williamsburg. The program committee has secured as the featured speaker Steve Dunning, NCTE president-elect, whom many Virginia teachers have heard and whose lectures they have found entertaining, practical, and inspiring.

Readers who would like to submit names of program participants from their localities for the Saturday morning sessions, should send names, addresses, and specialty areas of recommended participants to Frances Wimer, program chairman. Group discussion leaders and recorders, as well as table leaders for a "teaching ideas clinic," are needed. We would like to have all areas of Virginia and all levels of English and related disciplines represented.

More details will come to you in later communications, but please note the October date on your calendar and plan to attend.

To mark the occasion further, VATE is planning a special bonus anniversary issue of the *Virginia English Bulletin* in addition to the two regular issues. Each person in attendance at the fall conference will receive a copy, and all others who renew their memberships or become new members during the fall, will receive one at a later date.

Plans are being initiated for solicitation of congratulatory patron ads as a way of partially defraying expenses. More details concerning this "patron" or "sponsor" program are not yet available but members who are interested can contact William Gray, Midlothian High School, Midlothian, Virginia 23113 for further information.

At that first meeting in 1914, the selection of officers was done by acclamation, but with our memberships now numbering in the thousands, a more sophisticated voting system is being introduced. On a trial basis this spring, each affiliate president has been asked to assume responsibility for the distribution and collection of ballots in his area. He will send the proper number of ballots to the department chairmen and request that the ballots be distributed, used, and returned to him for reporting to the chairman of the election committee. The *President's Newsletter* to members, to be sent in May, will give you pertinent information about each candidate on the dual-slate ballot.

At its February meeting of this year, the Executive Committee authorized our president to extend an invitation to NCTE to hold its annual

convention of 1978 in Virginia. When NCTE came to Richmond in February, 1914, our state organization was only in the planning stage. In 1969, when VATE co-hosted the convention in Washington with Maryland and the District of Columbia English associations, over 300 VATE members served on committees. If our invitation is accepted by NCTE for 1978, we should have many, many more participating to make it a great convention.

In the beginning, the dues were twenty-five cents a year. You would have thought that by 1974 VATE would have set dues at no less than $5.00. And what $5.00 a member--with no loss in membership—could do for VATE! But VATE has moved slowly in raising dues, and it has been only about four years ago that dues were raised to $2.00. From this amount the state organization gets only $1.50 for its heavy expenses, since each affiliate keeps 50 cents per member in its treasury. We could continue to keep the dues low if the affiliates could succeed in getting every English faculty in its area represented in our membership and if more schools could report 100% membership of the English faculty. No affiliate has yet reached the perfect 100% representation from every area academic institution—public and private secondary and college—but during 1973 these affiliates led: TATE-T, 88%; KATE 79%, and BATE, 78%. A number of schools are reporting 100% English faculty membership during the current session. The number of schools reporting 100% English faculty membership is 119 with the following affiliates in the lead: DATE, 13; PATE, 11; and GATE, MATE, and QATE with 10 each.

During the 1920's this organization had two pages of "English Notes" in the *Virginia Journal of Education;* in the 1970's VATE is itself publishing each session two issues of the *Virginia English Bulletin* of sixty or more pages each. Excerpts from our publication are frequently printed in NCTE's *Council-Grams,* and our editor, Frances Wimer, is to be congratulated for having two recent issues-"Behavioral Objectives" (winter, 1970) and "The Communication Arts" (spring, 73)—cited as substantial contributions to the literature of education and included in the ERIC system by the Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.

The 1925 minutes recorded the fact that "several districts, A,B,D,I, and K, have organized English Associations auxiliary to the State Association," but apparently by the 1930's these associations had reverted to the English sections of the district education organizations. In 1974 every district has an organized and active English Association—some with annual meetings at the district meeting time, some with annual dinner meetings, and some with two meetings each session. On February 16 of this year CATE went still further and conducted a one-day seminar for its members and those of adjacent areas. Paul Krueger, consultant for English, McDougal, Littell and Company, flew to Virginia to give the keynote address, and participants chose two out of five group sessions to attend during the day. We congratulate Bill Gray, of Midlothian High School, for providing this

excellent program, more details of which you will find in the *President's Newsletter* in May.

With VATE active now and moving enthusiastically to greater achievements in the future, it is with regret that we can no longer include in our announcements the annual spring conference for English teachers at the University of Virginia. For over twenty years that conference now discontinued, gave many Virginia teachers a pleasant day in Charlottesville, where they heard nationally known speakers and in groups discussed subjects of mutual interest. It was a good time for Executive Committee meetings too, and we shall miss going there. On behalf of VATE, let me thank Dick Meade for the outstanding contribution to English teaching in Virginia which those conferences have made.

Finally, in the hope that 1974 will be a greater anniversary year, I suggest that each member resolve now that when next fall comes, if your English faculty is not 100% in membership, it will not be because of your failure to renew your membership.

Committee on Certification Requirements

Representatives of state colleges and universities, local school districts, and professional organizations met on Tuesday, April 2 in Richmond to study present certification practices in English and related subjects and to recommend changes concerning their revisions. There are subcommittees in language, literature, composition, speech and dramatic arts, journalism and method courses. The committee is working under the auspices of the English office of the Virginia State Department of Education and will meet again in May.

Famous Teachers' School

Registration totals indicate that over 800 persons attended the NCTE Secondary School English Conference.

The Conference was held at the Washington Hilton in Washington, D. C. on March 22, 23, and 24. The Conference theme was: Famous Teachers' School, Teaching English: 1974-1984-2001.

Keynote speakers included: Maia Wojciechowska, author of *Tuned Out, The Rotten Years*, and *The Shadow of the Bull* in an address, *The Failed School Evolution or How Did We Lose the Children?;* Roger M. Steffens, poet-actor-lecturer in a one-man show on Saturday night; Alan Purves and Leo Ruth in a debate, *Humanism vs. Behaviorism* in Education and B. Frank Brown, Institute for Development of Educational Ideas, an address Educational Priorities: Toward 2001.

In addition to addresses there were workshops, seminars, conferences, and panel discussions on a variety of topics. Among the Virginians who served either as program participants or chairpersons were: Brenda Epperson, Paul Canady, Paul White, Frances Wimer, Roger Bergstrom, Diana Schmelzer, Joan Curcio, Alan McLeod, Harold Gibson, William Goggin, Roger Shuy, and Leon Williams.

There were also sight-seeing tours, school visits and exhibits. Lake Braddock Secondary School in Fairfax County was among the schools visited by participants.

Charlotte Brooks, Conference local chairman, John Maxwell, NCTE Deputy Executive Secretary and Louis M. Papes, Program Committee chairman wish to express their gratitude to Virginians who assisted with the conference in any capacity.

Council Requests Members to Renew Promptly

Once again NCTE urges its members and subscribers to renew promptly and thereby save the Council tons of paper and a considerable amount of money. The spring months are among the heaviest times for NCTE membership and subscription renewal. Thousands of members receive first notices and apparently set them aside.

When the initial notice is disregarded, NCTE issues a second notice. For a discouragingly large number of members, it is necessary to send a third and final notice. Second and final notices cost the Council approximately $30,000 a year in postage and paper, computer and staff time. Add to this the adverse impact of needless waste on the environment.

Please renew promptly when your first notice comes.

Commission on Reading Sponsors Program at IRA

The NCTE Commission on Reading has planned a co-sponsored program at the meeting of the International Reading Association (IRA) at New Orleans, May 1-4.

Robert Ruddell, director of the commission, will lead a panel on "Performance-Based Teacher Education for Teachers of Reading." Other members of the panel will be James Laffey, Madison College, Va.; Richard Earle, Indiana University; and Gary Kilaar, Aquinas College, Mich. Ruddell is from the University of California at Berkeley.

Education, Occupation May Determine Individual's Life-Span

Education and occupation may determine how long one lives, according to Erdman B. Palmore and Virginia Stone of the Duke University Center for the Study of Aging and Development. In 1958, Palmore and Stone took a sample of 900 persons aged 60 and over and calculated their life expectancies according to actuarial tables. When they checked their predictions in 1971, they discovered that high-status, well-educated elderly persons tended to live longer than expected and that the least educated died sooner than had been predicted. Ph.D.'s lived longer than M.A.'s, who in turn lived longer than B.A.'s. Further, the study suggested that factors commonly associated with longevity are relatively unimportant: physical activity did not seem to assure a longer life, and retirement appeared to have no decisive effect either way. (From NCTE *Council-Grams* March, 1974.)